WEEK 39

God guided Israel to repentance

Ezra 7:1-10:44



DAY 1

God provided for Israel's worship • Ezra 7:1-28

READ

Ezra 7:1-28

EXPLAIN ②

The truth of Ezra 7:1-28

A physical temple is only good if people worship there with right hearts. But in the 50 years between Ezra 6 and 7, the hearts of the Jews strayed from God. Since God was still committed to having a people to worship in His presence, God providentially raised up the right leader to bring the hearts of His people back to Him. Ezra was a priest skilled in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:1-6), and God provided people to return to Jerusalem with Ezra (7:7-10). While the group that returned with Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple, this second group returned to ensure that the temple was functioning properly. Like Zerubbabel, Ezra succeeded because "the good hand of his God" gave them success (7:6). This phrase is often repeated (cf. 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31) to emphasize that it was by God's sovereign hand that the people were able to return. Ezra recognized God's <u>unrivaled power</u> over Artaxerxes (7:27; Prov 21:1) and over himself (Ezra 7:28). This gave Ezra courage, so he prepared the leaders of Israel for the journey to Jerusalem (7:28).

ASK



- 1. Why did the Israelite's hearts need to be restored?
 - Because God's purpose in bringing them back to the land was so that they would worship Him
- 2. What man did God prepare to restore Israel?
 - God prepared Ezra, a priest who studied, obeyed, and taught God's law.
- 3. What did the king give Ezra?
 The king gave permission to any Jew who wanted to return to Jerusalem. He also gave silver and gold and articles for temple service.
- 4. What phrase repeatedly emphasizes that it was God's power that restored His people? "The hand of God" (Ezra 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31).

DISCUSS S



- 1. What kind of people do you follow? What makes someone a good leader? Why is it important to have a good leader?
- 2. How does God's unrivaled power give you courage to obey Him?

DAY 2

God protected Ezra on his journey to Jerusalem • Ezra 8:1-36

READ |

Ezra 8:1-36

EXPLAIN **②**

The truth of Ezra 8:1-36

God is determined to have a people devoted to worshiping Him, so by His great power He makes sure His plan will happen. He raised up the right man, and now He provided for the trip to Jerusalem. First, He gathered the people (Ezra 7:28b-8:14). Second, He supplied Levites for worship in the temple (8:15–20). Third, He protected the people (8:21-26). The journey to Jerusalem was dangerous, but Ezra was determined to make it without any help from Artaxerxes' soldiers. Ezra believed in the sovereignty of God, and his life proved it. He did not want to do anything to confuse the king concerning his trust in God's ability to protect the people on the return to Jerusalem (8:22). So the people, urged on by Ezra, depended on God alone through prayer and fasting (8:21-23). God answered, so Ezra and those with him were able to aid the people and the house of God (8:31-36). As with all that came before, this divine deliverance came at "the hand of our God" (8:31).

ASK 🔞

- 1. How did Ezra find Levites willing to return?
 - Ezra got the help of Israel's leaders, but ultimately it was by the good hand of God.
- 2. Who was missing from the group, and why were they important? The Levites. The Levites were the only ones who could assist in temple worship.
- 3. Why did the Jews fast and pray? Fasting and prayer were acts of utter dependence on God to protect them on the journey.

DISCUSS S



- 1. If you believe God is sovereign, how will your life show it?
- 2. How has God protected and provided for you? Do you talk about this with others, so that they will see God's power?

DAY 3

God prompted the people to repent • Ezra 9:1-10:44

READ 📖



Ezra 9:1-10:19

EXPLAIN (1)

The truth of Ezra 9:1-10:19

God knew why He was bringing Ezra to Jerusalem, but Ezra did not know until now, when he heard the sad news: just a few generations after the first return under Zerubbabel, the Jews had begun to intermarry with the people in the land (Ezra 9:1-3). Even the priests and Levites were guilty. Israel was supposed to be a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6), pure and set apart to worship God. God had forbidden intermarriage because foreign wives inevitably led Israel to worship foreign gods (Exod 34:10-17; Deut 7, 23). In desperation, Ezra threw himself upon the mercy of God (Ezra 9:3-15). He identified himself with his people as he prayed with true humility and utter brokenness over sin. Ezra entrusted himself completely—no matter the consequences-to the God who is "just" (9:15). Many of the people truly repented. They were broken over their sin (10:1–5) and committed to turn away from their sin (10:6-15). Three months later, in time for the Passover celebration, the Jews had completely separated themselves from the surrounding people (10:16–17). They were ready to worship God.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 🔞

- 1. How had the people sinned? They had married foreign women, which led them to worship foreign gods.
- 2. What did Ezra do when he heard? He was very sad, trembled, and confessed the sins of the people.
- 3. Why was Israel's sin especially bad? Even after God graciously restored them from exile, they turned to the same sin that had begun Israel's fall (1 Kings 11).
- 4. How did the people respond? They repented.

DISCUSS 🦃



- 1. How do you respond to sin in your family, church, or community? What things can you imitate from Ezra's response?
- 2. How do you know the people repented? What elements of true repentance do you see (confession, sorrow, getting rid of the sin, turning to God)? When you "apologize," do you truly repent?

DAY 4

Rightly handling the word of truth • 2 Timothy 2:15

READ



2 Timothy 2:15

EXPLAIN **(9)**



Only some are called to be teachers of the church like Timothy (1 Cor 12:29; 1 Tim 2:12; Jas 3:1). But every Christian, including you, is called to teach God's word in some way (Deut 6:7; Col 3:16; Titus 2:3-4). Ezra shows you the preparation that is required (Ezra 7:10). First, he diligently studied God's word. So like him, be a hard worker, rightly handling God's word (2 Tim 2:15). Do not misrepresent God. Work hard to get it exactly right. Be diligent to guard against false teaching (2:14, 16-17). Second, Ezra put God's word into practice in his own life. This does not mean you have to be perfect before teaching, but you embrace God's word for your own life and show good fruit (Matt 7:5, 16). Third, as you know and do, then teach. Perhaps you will one day do so as an elder over the church (1 Tim 3:2), but even if not, you are still called to serve as a priest of God (1 Pet 2:5). Only when every believer is faithful to teach others will the church be what it is called to be (Col. 3:16).

ASK 🔞



- 1. What was Ezra's pattern of preparation? He studied God's word, obeyed God's word, and taught God's word (Ezra 7:10).
- 2. Why is it important to study and obey God's word before teaching others? So our words and actions match God's word; so we're not a hypocrite (Matt 7:5).
- 3. What does it mean to accurately handle God's
 - It means to work very hard to get it right.
- 4. Who is called to teach? All Christians are called to teach one another (Col 3:16).

DISCUSS 🦃



- 1. What are some jobs where it's important to be accurate? What happens when someone does something inaccurate in a job like this? Are the consequences greater when dealing with God's
- 2. Since you are called to teach God's word in some way, what steps can you take to be able to do so?

DAY 5

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion • Philippians 1:6

READ **III**

Philippians 1:1-11

EXPLAIN **②**

The truth of Philippians 1:6

God made sure to complete His work in Israel by returning them to the land and restoring their hearts to Himself, and one day He will finish that work (Rom 11:26). So you can trust that God does the same for you, if you are His. By His sovereign grace He saved you, and by His sovereign grace He restores and reforms you over and over again. So when you feel like you are too weak and doomed to fail, run to Him in prayer as Ezra did and receive mercy and grace for every need (Heb 4:16). Like Ezra, you must work hard to grow in godliness, but your hope is in the grace of God at work in you (1 Cor 15:10). Your hope is not in yourself, but in your God who will complete His work in you (Phil 1:6). And this hope will not fail, because when God saves, He never fails to finish the job (John 6:40, 44; Rom 5:10). He faithfully keeps all those He saves until the "day of Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10).

ASK 🔞



- 1. Who completes God's work of salvation? God Himself.
- 2. Why don't we need to fear concerning God's work of salvation? Because God will not fail to bring His work to completion.
- 3. When is God's work of salvation brought to completion? The "day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).
- 4. How are believers rewarded? According to the faithfulness of their ministry on earth (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10).

DISCUSS S



- 1. Describe a time you started something but were unable to finish it. Why is this never true of God?
- 2. When you are carrying something heavy, does it slow you down? If you live as if your salvation depends on your own efforts, will you be more or less successful in serving God?

NEXT WEEK

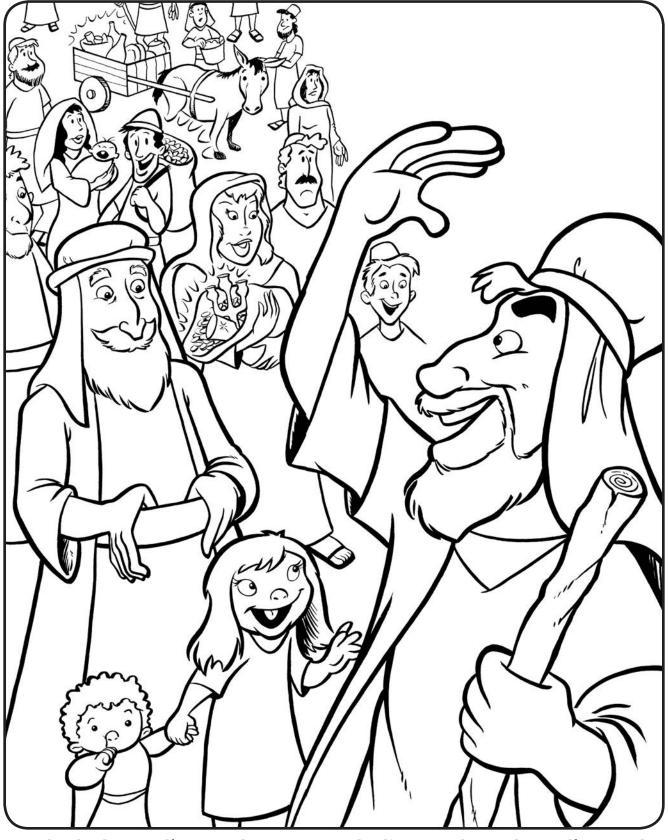
God led Nehemiah to reconstruct the wall

Nehemiah 1:1-7:73a



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44





To be holy, God's people must study, live, and teach God's word.



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44



God sanctifies His people.



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1–10:44

God's Good Hand

See page 82 of the Teacher Book Year 2, Book 3





God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1–10:44

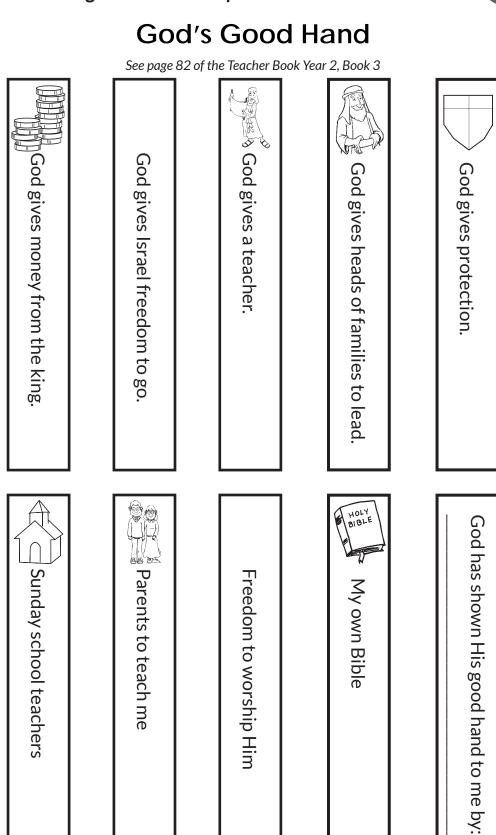
God's Good Hand

See page 82 of the Teacher Book Year 2, Book 3





God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44

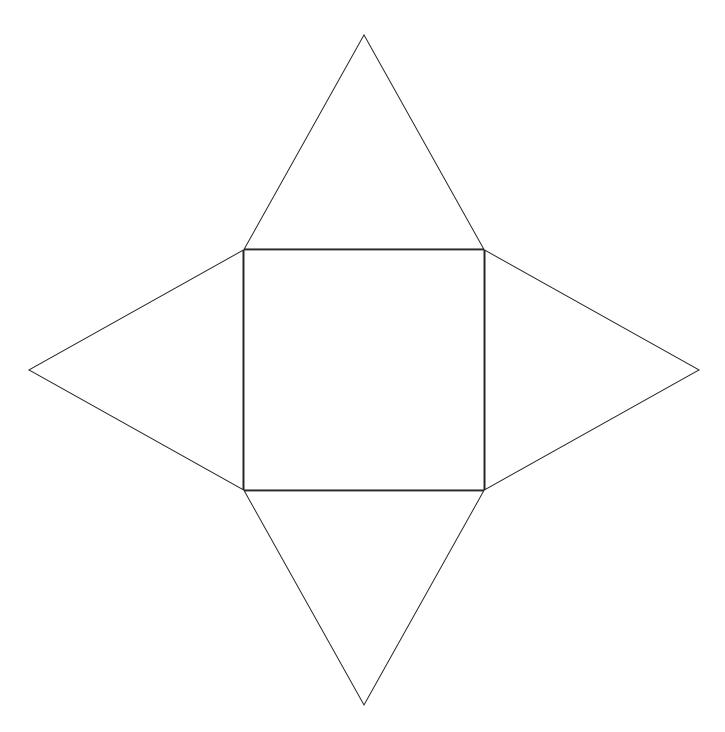




God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1–10:44

God's Goodness

See page 83 of the Teacher Book Year 2, Book 3

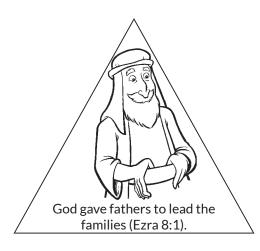


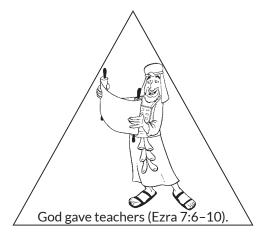


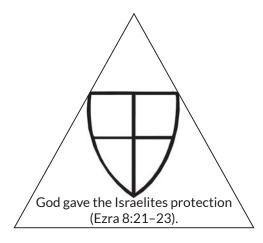
God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1–10:44

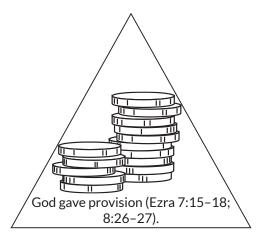
God's Goodness

See page 83 of the Teacher Book Year 2, Book 3







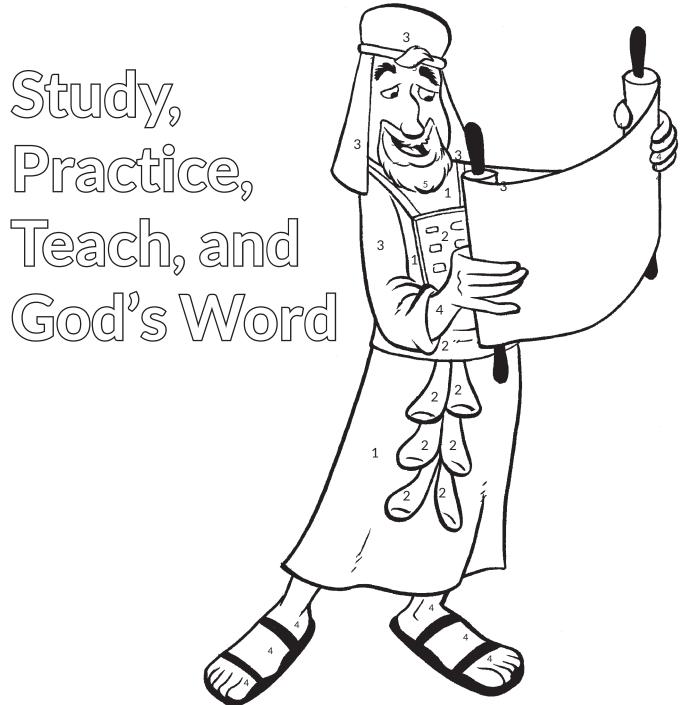




God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44

Color by Number

Color the map below according to the following color code: 1 = blue; 2 = yellow; 3 = gray; 4 = tan; 5 = brown.



All believers ought to be motivated by authentic worship and care for the things of God. Every believer must set His heart on God's word, not only to study it but to put it in practice. Do you delight in God's word (Ps 119:14–16; 23–24; 46–48; 70–72; 161–162; 173–174)?



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44

Unscrambling Key Verses

Unscramble the words in each box and put them in the correct places in the key verse below it.

	teahr daftsetsa	feytibau raselJuem		uhos sledB					
<i>"</i>	b	e the LORD, the Go	d of our fa	ithers, wl	ho put such				
	a thing as this	into the	of t	he king,					
to	. — — — — —	the	of	the LORI	D that is in _				
, and who	extended to me h	nis		love	before the				
king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers" (Ezra 7:27–									
_	tds 0LD	gltiu ralsle	-						
nnm	netar ——————	peaceds							
"O	, the God o	of	, you						
are just, fo	or we are left a _		that						
has		, as it is today. Beh	old, we						
are befo	ore you in our	, for r	none		WILA				
car	ı	before you becau	se of this'	' (Ezra 9:	15).				

In Ezra 7:1–10:44, the author presented three divine actions that God took to bring His people to proper a relationship with Him: (1) God provided for Israel's worship (7:1–28a); (2) God protected Ezra on his journey to Jerusalem (7:28b–8:36); and (3) God prompted the people to repent (9:1–10:44).



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44

Hidden Message

Find the words in the list below. The words may appear horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or backwards. Starting in the upper left, the one-sentence hidden message will be revealed in the letters that were not selected as you read left to right. Write the message in the blanks at the bottom of the page.

	Α	Н	G	Ο	D	Н	I	М	Ε	S	Ε	Р	L	S	W	
	R	F	Ο	Р	R	Ο	V	L	I	D	R	Е	Α	Ο	D	
	Z	J	J	L	Е	S	Р	U	S	Ο	Α	Ν	R	S	Т	
	Ε	Н	Ο	Е	Υ	М	S	Р	V	R	С	S	Ο	Т	L	
	Ε	S	U	S	Ε	L	Α	I	Ε	Т	Н	М	В	F	Ο	
	R	Н	R	Т	I	S	D	Р	I	I	Р	Ε	Ο	Р	L	
	Ε	L	Ν	Р	K	Ε	Е	F	Р	F	K	G	В	М	Р	
	K	Ε	Ε	Z	Ν	Ν	I	Ε	L	Р	Ο	Е	Р	Ε	Ε	
	Υ	U	Υ	Т	Т	С	S	Α	F	Ε	Т	Υ	G	L	V	
	Ν	Т	I	S	Α	Ν	С	Т	I	F	Υ	U	K	Α	Р	
	F	Α	М	Т	J	Z	U	D	Р	W	L	I	S	S	R	
	L	W	I	R	G	Т	W	D	L	L	Н	Υ	D	U	J	
	W	Ο	J	Т	D	Ε	T	С	Ε	Т	Ο	R	Р	R	Ε	
	Ν	D	Ε	D	I	V	Ο	R	Р	I	S	R	Α	Ε	L	
	D	Ε	Τ	Р	М	Ο	R	Р	Р	Υ	L	F	F	J	В	
EZRA HOLY ISRAEL JERUSALEM Hidden Message:				PR	OURNEY PEOPLE COMPTED OTECTED			PROVIDED PROVIDENTIAL REPENT SAFETY			SANCTIFICATION SANCTIFY TEMPLE WORSHIP					
Define the word <i>providential</i> .																



God guides Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44

See What You Know!

MI	E				
	(God provide	entially works to	sanctify His people.	
1.	Ezra 7:6 says tha	t Ezra was s	killed in the Law	of	
	God	Aaron	Moses	David	
2.	Ezra had prepare	ed his heart	to	·	
	seek Goo	l's Law	do God's Law		
	teach Go	d's Law	all of the abo	ve	
3.	Who gave the pe	ople guidan	ce on their trip	rom Babylon to Jerusaler	m?
	Ezra	God	Artaxerxes		
4.	True or False: Th	e people sin	ned by marryin	pagan women.	
5.	True or False: Th	e people tri	ed to hide their	in from God.	
6.	Ezra told the pe	ople to	their	sin and to separate then	nselves from pagai
	wives (10:11).				
	keep	hide	confess	cover-up	
7	Did the people	choose to h	onor God by o	peying Ezra?	
9.	How can you ho	nor God?			
8.	Define the word	sanctificatio	on		
9.	How are God's	people supp	oosed to grow i	n holiness?	



God guided Israel to repentance

EZRA 7:1-10:44





God sanctifies His people.



"We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this" (Ezra 10:2).

Supporting Truths

- 1. God's people must be holy.
- 2. The holiness of God's people depends on the work of God.
- 3. To be holy, God's people must confess and turn from their sin.
- 4. To be holy, God's people must study, live, and teach God's word.
- 5. To be holy, God's people must depend on God's mercy.

Objectives

- 1. Define "holy."
- 2. State the phrase that is repeated throughout these chapters.
- 3. Describe how Ezra and the people demonstrated their sadness over their sin.
- 4. Describe Ezra and explain what made him the right man for the job.
- 5. Show how Ezra and the people depended entirely on Gods' mercy through prayer.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God guided Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44



Lesson Summary

Israel had been in the land for multiple generations, but while the temple had been rebuilt, the people had rebelled. They, like their forefathers, had taken foreign wives, resulting in the worship of foreign gods. So Ezra, eighty years after Cyrus' decree, led a second group to return to Jerusalem. This return, made successful by "the hand of God," led to the repentance of God's people and the restoration of true worship.

Spotlight on the Gospel

In Ezra's return, the LORD providentially guided Israel to repentance and a proper relationship with Him. However, the ultimate display of God's provision to His people is seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God Himself provided Jesus as the spotless lamb. He alone protected Jesus' path to the cross to bear the sin of His people. And it is God Himself that prompts His people to repent and grow in holiness as they hope in Christ.



God brought about the restoration of the temple Ezra 1:1-6:22



God guided Israel to repentance

Ezra 7:1-10:44



God led Nehemiah to reconstruct the wall Nehemiah 1:1-7:73a

RETURN

Lesson Commentary

God sanctifies His people.

In the previous lesson (Ezra 1:1–6:22), God providentially worked through Persian kings and ordinary people to rebuild His temple and restore worship there. But a temple and acts of worship are empty unless they come from a reformed people. There is a gap of over 50 years between Ezra 6 and 7, and during that time the people, following the actions of their leaders, had wandered from wholehearted obedience to God. In Ezra 7–10, God providentially worked to bring His people back into a proper a relationship with Him.

God provided for Israel's worship (7:1-28)

First, God providentially raised up the right man to bring the hearts of His people back to Him. Ezra was both qualified and equipped, a priest skilled in the law of Moses (7:1–6). His pattern of preparation is a timeless example to all who study and teach God's word (7:10). Every believer must set His heart on God's word, not only to study it, but also to put it into practice. Only then are we ready to open our mouths and instruct others (Matt 7:5). We must handle God's word with all diligence, teaching the Scriptures with precision and accuracy (2 Tim 2:15), knowing that those who teach others will be judged with greater strictness (Jas 3:1).



THINK ABOUT IT

Like Ezra, every believer must know God's word more and more, be what God tells him to be, and teach others also. In addition to this qualified and equipped leader, God also provided a people to return to Jerusalem with Ezra (Ezra 7:7-10). While the first group to return rebuilt the temple, this second group went back to ensure that

the temple was functioning properly. And like the first group, this second group was successful because it was God who went before them. It was "the hand of the LORD" that gave Ezra and the people success (7:6). This phrase is often repeated (cf. 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31) to emphasize that it was by God's *sovereign* hand that the people were able to return. God showed His

<u>unrivaled power</u> when he moved Artaxerxes, the great leader of the Medo-Persian Empire, to provide for the people's return (7:12–26).

Ezra recognized the LORD's powerful hand at work in the life of Artaxerxes (7:27; cf. Prov 21:1) and in his own life (Ezra 7:28). This gave him courage, so Ezra prepared the leaders of Israel for the journey to Jerusalem (7:28). The providence of God greatly encourages believers. Because of God's complete care and control over all creation, Christians need not be anxious about tomorrow (Matt 6:34) or fear great calamity (Rom 6:34). However, God's providence must never be used as an excuse to fail to act in faith. Like Ezra, we must obediently respond to God's leading in our lives, taking courage in God's unbeatable power. In so doing, we follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, courageous men and women like Moses (Exod 4:1-9), Joshua (Josh 1:1-9; 5:13-15), Rahab (2:8-14), Daniel (Dan 6:10), and Esther (Esth 4:14).

God protected Ezra on his journey to Jerusalem (8:1–8:36)

The LORD provided for the people's journey in four ways. First, He gathered the people (Ezra7:28b–8:14). Again, it was because of "the hand of the the LORD" that Ezra was able to assemble the people (7:28b). Second, Yahweh supplied Levites for worship in the temple (8:15–20). The lay people were ready, but no Levites had chosen to return. So Ezra sent men to gather the Levites (8:17). However, it was only "by the good hand of our God on us" that 38 willing Levities were located (8:18–20).

Third, the LORD protected the people (8:21–26). The journey to Jerusalem was dangerous, but Ezra was determined to make it without any help from Artaxerxes' soldiers. He did not want to do anything to confuse

the king concerning his trust in God's ability to protect the people on the return to Jerusalem (8:22). So the people, urged on by Ezra, depended on God alone

THINK ABOUT IT

The world may dismiss what we say, but it often takes note of what we do.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God guided Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44



through prayer and fasting (8:21–23). Ezra believed in the sovereignty of God, and his life proved it. God listened to the prayer of His people (8:31–36). As a result, Ezra and those who returned with him were able to aid the people and the house of God (8:35–36). As with all that came before, this divine deliverance came at "the hand of our God" (8:31).

God prompted the people to repent (9:1-10:44)

But Ezra soon heard sad news: just a few generations after the first return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, the Jews had begun to intermarry with the people in the land (9:1–2). Even the priests and Levites were guilty (9:1). Ezra was devastated by Israel's unfaithfulness (9:3). Israel was supposed to be a *holy* nation (Exod 19:5–6), *pure and set apart* to worship God. God had forbidden intermarriage because foreign wives inevitably led Israel to worship foreign gods (Exod 34:10–17; Deut 7, 23). To a great extent this sin had caused Israel's defeat and exile in the first place. How could they return so quickly to the same sin? Neither the punishment of exile nor the grace of return was enough to keep the people from going back to their fathers' sin.

In desperation, Ezra threw himself upon the mercy of God (Ezra 9:3–15). He identified himself with his people as he prayed with true humility and utter brokenness over sin. After all, what hope is there for a people who sees God's grace and still turns away (9:8, 14)? Ezra realized how dead serious sin is, because ultimately all sin despises God's grace and tramples upon God's law (9:10). He did not blow it off by thinking, "It's no big deal, God forgives." Such presumption is dangerous, because God only forgives the truly broken. Instead Ezra entrusted himself completely—no matter the consequences—to the God who is "just" (Ezra 9:15). This is the only way to grow in holiness, only when we realize the magnitude of our sin and our inability to change ourselves no matter how many chances we're given. We grow in holiness only when

we cry out for the mercy of God. And this dependence on God's mercy only deepens as we grow. As we grow in sanctification, the process by which God makes us more and more holy, we see more and more God's great holiness, our great sin, and our desperate need for God's mercy. Many of the people truly repented. They were broken over their sin (10:1-5) and committed to turn away from their sin (10:6-15). Three months later, in time for the Passover celebration, the Jews had completely separated themselves from the surrounding people (10:16-17). They were ready to worship God. God had created and saved them for this. He had restored them and rebuilt the temple for this. And now He purified them for this. In both their exile and return, God was at work, sovereignly and lovingly drawing the hearts of His people back to Him.

For us, God does the same. By His sovereign grace He saves us, and by His sovereign grace He restores and reforms us over and over again. That is why, whether threatened

THINK ABOUT IT
Our hope is not
in ourselves, but
in our God who
will complete
His work in us
(Phil 1:6).



from without or failing within, we run to Him in prayer as Ezra did, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in every time of need (Heb 4:16). And though we must, like Ezra, work hard to grow in godliness, our hope is in the grace of God at work in us (1 Cor 15:10).

Lesson Outline

God sanctifies His people.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



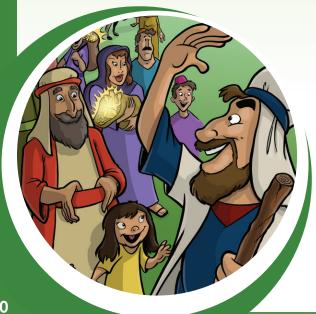
- 1. God leads His people to worship Him (7:1–28).
- 2. God leads His people to complete His work (8:1-8:36).
- 3. God leads His people to repent (9:1–10:44).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



- 1. God provided for Israel's worship (7:1-28).
 - The LORD provided Ezra as a qualified leader (7:1-6).
 - The LORD provided a people dedicated to His law (7:7-10).
 - The Lord provided Artaxerxes' decree (7:11–28).

- 2. God protected Ezra on his journey to Jerusalem (8:1–8:36).
 - The LORD gathered the people (7:28b-8:14).
 - The Lord supplied the Levites (8:15–20).
 - The LORD listened to the prayer of His people (8:21–30).
 - The LORD delivered the people and goods safely (8:31–36).
- 3. God prompted the people to repent (9:1–10:44).
 - Ezra saw the people's sin of intermarriage (9:1–5).
 - Ezra led the people in a confession of sin (9:6–15).
 - The people confessed their sin and reaffirmed God's law (10:1-4).
 - The people separated themselves from their foreign wives (10:5–44).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God guided Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1–10:44



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3-5 Lesson Questions

- What man did God prepare to restore Israel?
 God prepared Ezra, a priest who studied, obeyed, and taught God's law.
- 2. Who helped Ezra to arrive in Jerusalem safely?

 God used King Artaxerxes to help Ezra by granting his requests. Artaxerxes did this because the hand of the Lord was on him.
- 3. What did the people do after Ezra taught them the Law? The repented of their sin.
- 4. How did God respond to the people's sin? He was merciful.



Ages 6-11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the king give Ezra?
 - The king gave permission to any Jew who wanted to return to Jerusalem. He also gave silver and gold as an offering to God, money for offerings, and articles for temple service.
- 2. What phrase repeatedly emphasizes that it was God's power that restored His people? The hand of our God/the LORD (Ezra 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31).
- 3. Who was missing from the group, and why were they important?
 The Levites. The Levites were the only ones who could assist in temple worship.
- **4.** How did Ezra find Levites willing to return? Fasting and prayer were acts of utter dependence on God to protect them on the journey.
- 5. Why did the Jews fast and pray?

 God called it "the land which I will show you" Gen. 12:1). This was going to be a special land for Abram and his family.
- 6. How had the people sinned?
 - They had married foreign women, which led them to worship foreign gods.
- 7. What did Ezra do at the evening sacrifice?
 - Ezra confessed the sins of the people before the Lord. He knew that God had been gracious to the people, but they had sinned against God in return.
- 8. How did Israel demonstrate sorrow over their sin?
 - The people confessed their sin and wept bitterly before the Lord. They showed their repentance by divorcing their foreign wives.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3-5





PUPPETS

Cut out two eight-inch card-board circles. Draw a happy face on one and a sad face (with tears) on the other. Glue on yarn for hair, and glue a wooden stick to each. Explain to the children that today's lesson will show God's goodness to Ezra and the Israelites (hold up the happy-face puppet) and also Israel's sin and repentance in the Promised Land (hold up the sad-face puppet).

READ, OBEY, AND TEACH

As the children arrive, pull small groups aside and show them three cards: one should have a picture of the Bible, another should have a picture of hands or feet, and the third should have a picture of lips. Have the children take turns guessing what order the three cards should go in. Then read them Ezra 7:10, which gives the order as: read, obey, and teach. Explain that we cannot teach God's Word until we obey it, and we cannot obey it until we know what it say.



GOING TO JERUSALEM

Bring in various types of shoes—ballet shoes, snowshoes, hiking boots, tap shoes, cowboy boots, sandals, etc. Discuss what each shoe is for. Ask the children what type of shoes the Israelites might have worn in the hot desert on the way back to Jerusalem. Let the children pretend they are the Israelites hiking through the desert to Jerusalem.

SEPARATE FROM THE BAD

Talk about what it means to separate from something. Give the children various items to separate—uncooked pasta and beans, pennies and nickels, two types of breakfast cereal, beans and rocks, etc. Tell them that beans are good to eat and that you want to separate them from rocks, which are not edible. Sometimes we need to separate from bad things, too. Ask the children what things they should separate from. Talk about children who say bad words, get into trouble, talk back to their parents, are irresponsible with other people's property, etc. Tell the children that in today's lesson the Jews have to separate themselves from people who would lead them away from God.



GOD'S GOOD HAND

See Year2 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, scissors, glue.

Directions: Pre-cut the hands and the tabs from the craft sheets. In class, distribute the "God's Good Hand on Ezra and Israel" hand with the corresponding tabs. Have the children glue the tabs on the fingers. Then pass out the "God's Good Hand on Me" hand with corresponding tabs. Have the children glue the tabs on the fingers. Glue the two hands together. Help the students to think of a specific, personal way in which God has blessed them and then write it in the space provided

> God's Good Hand See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God guided Israel to repentance • Ezra 7:1-10:44



AGES 6–8





RETURNING TO ITS VOMIT

Sadly, within a few generations of the return to Jerusalem, the Jews began to intermarry with the people in the land (Ezra 9:1-2). It is almost unimaginable that the Jews would so quickly return to the same sin as their forefathers. It was this same sin that contributed to their removal from the promised land in the first place! Illustrate this by bringing in fake vomit or describing vomit to the children. Then ask them how they would feel about covering themselves with it. This is a vivid illustration of just what the Israelites did when they returned to their sin (Prov 26:11).

WALK WITH THE WISE

Tell the children a story about a boy who desired to obey his parents but found obedience increasingly difficult as he spent more time with friends who did not care about obedience. Ask the children why the boy found it hard to obey. Read Proverbs 13:20 and tell the children that in today's lesson the Israelites have chosen for their closest friends—their wives—people who worshiped idols. Ask the children how they think that affected the Israelites' obedience to God.



DIFFICULT TO REMOVE

It was very difficult and painful for the Jews to separate from their foreign wives. Separating from evil is not easy, but it is necessary. Illustrate this concept by showing the children a barb located on the end of an arrow, thorn, or fish hook. Explain how a barb makes it easy for the tip of the point to enter, but difficult to remove. This is also true of evil: it is easy to join ourselves to evil, but very difficult and painful to remove ourselves from it.

NEED A TISSUE?

The Jews were supposed to be holy, separated from evil. Sadly, many of the men had married foreign women who worshiped idols. Illustrate the concept of holiness by offering a soiled, used, disgusting tissue to someone who has a runny nose. Would any of the children want to use a tissue like this? No! Does God desire His children to be covered with sin and filth? No! God desires us to live in holiness, separated from sin and the corruption of the world.

God's Goodness See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2



GOD'S GOODNESS

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2. Materials: Craft sheets, yarn, hole punch, glue, tape, and crayons.

Directions: Have children cut out the pyramid template and pyramid pieces from the craft sheets. Color the pyramid pieces and glue them on to the pyramid template. Hole punch two of the tips, feed yarn through, and tie together the ends. Form the template into a pyramid by taping the inside edges together.



AGES 9-11







Explain what it means when someone is labeled a "repeat offender" in the criminal justice system. Talk about how the consequences for people who commit 2nd or 3rd or 4thcrimes are typically much greater than those committing their first crime. Tell the children that in today's lesson we're going to see a "repeat offender": the Jews who returned to Jerusalem. Sadly, within a few generations of the return to Jerusalem, the Jews began to marry idol worshipers (Ezra 9:1-2). Explain that this was the same sin that contributed to their forefathers' removal from the promised land in the first place.

LEARN, OBEY, AND TEACH (IN THAT ORDER!)

This was how Ezra prepared to teach the people (Ezra 7:10). Illustrate the importance of following God's ordained order by giving hygiene and fashion tips while exhibiting horrible hygiene and fashion yourself (mess up your hair, put a piece of broccoli between your teeth, wear different colored socks, pants that are too short to cover your ankles, or button your shirt incorrectly). Why should they follow your instructions if you haven't even followed your own?



IS IT RIGHT TO DO WRONG TO DO RIGHT

This lesson may raise a question:
Why were the people of Israel
told to divorce their wives, since
divorce is wrong? Divorce is
wrong, and God hates divorce. It
should be avoided at all costs. But
the Israelites' marriages to foreign
women were causing them to
commit adultery with foreign gods.
So in this specific situation, God
told them to separate themselves
by divorcing their foreign wives.

STEADY GROWTH

Sanctification—the process by which God makes us more and more holy, like Christ—should continue throughout a Christian's life. Represent this visually by drawing a line that rises steadily, even though the line might not be perfectly straight. Though there may be minor ups and downs, the overall direction is upward.



LEARN, OBEY, AND TEACH

In today's lesson we learned that Ezra studied God's Word, practiced what he learned, and then taught it to others. This is a great model for us to follow. We must begin by studying God's Word so that we understand it and know it. Then we should apply what we have learned to our lives. Finally, we should teach it to others. We should allow them to see how we are living out the truth and help them to do the same. What are some things that you have recently learned from God's Word? How should you apply these truths to your life? Are you doing what God's Word says? If so, are you also teaching others God's Word so that they might repent and obey God's Word?