

The book of



chapters

7 - 8

Day 1

1. Let's do a brief recap of the previous six chapters. King Cyrus issued a decree which allowed the Israelite captives to return to Jerusalem. (538 BC) They not only had permission, but Cyrus ordered the items King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be returned. The first group of Israelites returned under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, the governor over Judah. Ezra did not arrive for nearly 80 years after Cyrus' decree. (458 BC) Despite this amazing opportunity to return, things were not all smooth sailing. Those who returned faced opposition and setbacks along the way. Yet the temple was rebuilt, and the people celebrated Passover once again in Jerusalem. Read Ezra 7-8. These are exciting chapters.

2. Ezra 7 begins with the words "After these things." What important time stamp do you see in Ezra 7:1?

3. Ezra lists his genealogy. This might seem a bit strange to us, but to the Israelites this was of grave importance. Tracing his family line would show that he was legitimate to lead the people. As you will see, Ezra did not merely step up as a volunteer leader; he had the authority because of this family lineage.

Ezra traced his ancestry all the way back to \_\_\_\_\_  
the chief priest.

4. Because of his lineage, Ezra could legitimately lead the people. What important details are seen in verse 6 concerning Ezra's trip?

5. The words translated as a "ready scribe" (KJV) or "teacher well versed" (NIV) are the Hebrew words "mahiyr caphar." This means he was a diligent learner and doer of God's Word. He was able to recount the details exactly, to accurately apply God's word and to teach others. Why would this be of great importance?

6. The Israelites have been in bondage for a whole generation. Read Daniel 1:3-7, what was the first thing the Babylonians did with those brought into captivity? What might have been their purpose in making this change?



7. The key phrase we will see repeated in this chapter appears in Ezra 7:6, 9, 28. Highlight it in your Bible. Let's take a few minutes to ponder this phrase. Why would this be such an important factor for a leader?

What would this provide?

8. Ezra went to the king and sought approval of his plan. Many years earlier, King Cyrus issued a decree allowing the exiles to return. Cyrus is no longer the king of Persia, there is a new king now. Which king does Ezra go to seeking permission?

9. Ezra is about to lead many people back to Jerusalem. It is wise of him to get the necessary approval, so his actions are not misunderstood. Ezra 7:8 tells us that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with his people in what year?

10. Read Ezra 7:7-8 then list the people who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra?

## Day 2

11. This is approximately a 900-mile journey, with many women and children, livestock, and belongings. Read Ezra 7:8-9 again. How long did their journey take?

12. This journey could be very treacherous. It could be filled with bandits, wild animals, as well as rough and dangerous terrain. How was this journey going to be possible? (Ezra 7:6,9)

The importance of this fact cannot be over-emphasized. What might we do to ensure this can be said of us?



13. Ezra 7:10 gives us an even greater insight into the character of this man. What pattern of right priorities do you see in this verse?

14. I am so proud of you for diligently studying God's word. There are those who say they want to follow Jesus, and yet they do not like reading the Bible. I am not sure how that is possible. In their defense perhaps they have never learned how to study God's word. Take a few minutes and think about the things you have seen so far in your study of Ezra. What has been one or two take aways from your time in God's word?

How might these ideas, principles, or teachings help you in your daily walk of faith? Please share them in your small group discussion.

15. Read Luke 11:28, Romans 2:13, and John 13:17; Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 30:5; Psalms 119:105 and 160. There are hundreds of other verses we could turn to and find the affirmation for studying, obeying, and teaching God's word to others. What truth did you glean from these verses?

16. Can you recall a particular event or time when "the gracious hand of God" was on you?

17. Next, we will look at the details of the king's letter given to Ezra. How is Ezra described in verse 11?

What is his reputation thus far?

Even if we think no one notices us, someone is always watching. Think for a few minutes, if others were to describe you, what might be said?

18. Did you notice the king was not evicting the Israelites from his land? What does he say is the key factor to who goes and who stays? (Verse 13)

19. Ezra 7:14 goes farther than merely granting permission; the king assigns a purpose for this trip. What was the king's purpose of Ezra going to Jerusalem?

20. King Artaxerxes sent Ezra to see how the work was progressing. Work has always been a part of life. According to Genesis 2:15, whose idea was work?

Work can have a divine purpose. Have you ever thought about your work in this way?

What do Colossians 3:23-24 and 1 Corinthians 10:31 teach us about a proper view of work?

Think of the last important assignment you were given; would you say you shared this work perspective?

### Day 3

21. Now let's look at the next few verses. Read Ezra 7:13-17. What was the attitude of the heart of all who participated in the sacrifices to God described in verses 13, 15, 16?

What should be the attitude of the heart for all who participate in offerings today?

I can recall a time when writing out the tithe check was difficult for me. It seemed like such a large amount to simply give away. My friend Dorothy helped me understand that God did not need my money. The tithe is a matter of obedience and should be done with a cheerful heart. She reminded me that I was merely returning to God a portion of what he had blessed us with. If I wanted to write a smaller check, I could ask him to bless me less.



22. What instruction were they given concerning anything left over after the sacrifices were made? (Verse 18)

23. Malachi 3:10-12 gives clear instruction concerning the tithe the Israelites were to bring. God allows his children to test him and see if he will not remain faithful. After reading these verses in Malachi, what promises did God make? You may want to look these verses up in a couple of translations.

24. Ezra 7:21-23 describes in detail what Ezra has permission to ask of the treasurers. All of this is on top of what the king, his advisers, the people, and the priests have already given. Specifically, what was the list of things Ezra could ask the treasurers to provide from the royal treasury?

100 talents of \_\_\_\_\_, 100 cors of \_\_\_\_\_, 100 baths of \_\_\_\_\_, 100 baths of \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ without limit.

A talent was the largest of all measures used to trade monetarily. A talent equals approximately 75 pounds.

A cor equals (10 baths) approximately 60 gallons.

A bath equals approximately 6 gallons.

Are you beginning to see why this journey would have been dangerous and long?

25. Ezra was empowered with judicial authority for this journey. Look at verse 26, what are the two types of law to be used to judge the actions of those who returned to Jerusalem?

26. What were the various penalties for disobedience to either of these laws?

Do you believe the king was serious about the people living obedient and peaceful lives in the land upon their return?

27. Ezra 7:27-28 are the words of Ezra. To whom does he direct his praise and worship?

28. Specifically, what did Ezra say God had done for him before he took even one step toward Jerusalem?

29. After reading this chapter, how do you believe Ezra viewed his assignment?

Is this how you view your assignments?

Day 4

30. Ezra 8 begins with a pause. Ezra is a man of details; he records the names of every family head who came with him from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes. After reading verses 1-14, what did you notice about the size of the band of people he will be leading?

31. When one considers all the dangers along the way, this is no small task Ezra is about to undertake. It is not as if they will go unnoticed the entire way to Jerusalem. What blessing do you believe Ezra is relying on? (Read Ezra 7:28 again if you do not recall.)

The word used to describe the hand of the LORD in Ezra 7:28 is *Checed* which means the lovingkindness, favor, mercy, faithfulness, and goodness of God.

32. Do you feel the lovingkindness and goodness of God on the work he has called you to do?

33. Ezra 8:15-21 describes an exciting time for these Israelites. Ezra gathers the people at the canal that flows toward Ahava. The exact location is unknown today but is likely near Babylon. Who was found missing from this great congregation?

34. This great assignment from God was put on hold for three days. Because Ezra is interested in the spiritual needs of the people as well as their physical needs, he wants to be sure he has priests going with them. Men were sent to find priests willing to return with them and take on the roles of spiritual leaders of the people. The priest Sherebiah is described as “a capable man.” What do you believe this says about him? Capable of what?

35. Read verses 21-23. What do we see Ezra do next that serves a great example for us as we embark on our mission for God?

If you are a child of God, you have been commissioned. Read Matthew 28:18-20; what is our great commission?

36. What was the purpose of this time of fasting?

What were they about to ask God to do for them?

When you are about to ask God for something, do you take time to humble yourself and seek his face?

37. Ezra specifically asked God to grant them safety as they journeyed to Jerusalem. We have seen this king is disposed to give Ezra whatever he needed. But because he had told the king about his great God, what did he hesitate to ask the king to provide?



38. Have you ever done something like that?

Perhaps it had to do with finances or health issues, or family dynamics. You trusted God would supply the need even though you don't see how. I am constantly amazed at the provision of God for this Bible study over the years. Every year God blesses us with new women who desire to study God's word and then he provides the funds.

George Mueller was a humble pastor and man of God who cared for an entire orphanage of children and never asked anyone for provisions. He simply prayed and God put it on the people's heart to give. When an orphan became old enough to leave, Mr. Mueller prayed with them and placed a Bible in their right hand and explain, if you hold on to what is in your right-hand, God will provide for your left hand.

39. Ezra 8:23 is a beautiful example for us today. They fasted, prayed a prayer of petition...and God \_\_\_\_\_ their prayer.

40. Look at verses 24-29. Ezra is not the only man of character in this vast congregation. He has an inner circle of men who are leaders and men of discretion and understanding. What very important assignment does he give these men?

41. What did you learn from Ezra that might help you carry out the next divine assignment God gives you?

42. Not only was great care given in the measurement, description, and distribution of these articles but Ezra reminded them of their own worth. What did he say about these men and the articles put in their care? (vs. 28)

43. What specific instructions were given to the men in Ezra 8:29?

44. Ezra was quite clear with these men, what did he tell them would happen again when they arrived in Jerusalem?



45. Did you notice any familiar words in verses 18,31?

I bet it brought a smile to your face as you read it this time.  
Do you take time to acknowledge this in your ministry?

Maybe you thought, I do not have a ministry. Please look up and write out the meaning of the word ministry.

## Day 5

46. It is imperative that we see the hand of God on our life. We must not take lightly the provision and favor he shows us. A thankful heart is a humble and joy-filled heart. It is the kind of heart that can boldly come to ask our heavenly Father for further provision and favor. Why not stop for a few moments and talk to God about what you are thankful for right now.  
What provision and favor has he shown you?

47. What date is mentioned in Ezra 8:31?

Do you believe this was an exciting day for the Israelites?

We love to celebrate beginnings, the day of one's birth, the first day of school, the first day of a new job, these are all days to remember.

48. Write a timeline of what you have seen in Ezra 7-8.

49. In verse 31 we read, the hand of God was with them, protecting them from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.



50. Does this feel familiar?

We pray and ask God for provision and protection and yet there are potential trials all along the way. Ezra and his congregation did not have a problem-free journey. No, they had something better than that!!! They had the favor of God. I say that it is better because when we see our problems and we experience God's favor, we have much to praise him about. Please share in your small group a situation that you prayed seeking God's protection and then enjoyed his favor. Was your experience problem free? How might problems enhance our testimony?

51. Let's look at Ezra 8:32-36, where have they arrived?

What did they do?

I can't say I blame them. Quite often when our children were young, we would drive from Oklahoma City to Phoenix, Arizona to see my grandparents. This was a similar journey in mileage, approximately 970 miles. One of the biggest differences was, we traveled in a comfortable vehicle on smooth interstate highways and did not fear bandits and robbers along the way. We still needed to rest after arriving.

52. What happened on the fourth day?

53. Can you imagine how these Israelites would have felt?

This would be the first time in their lifetime to experience worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Do you feel this same pleasure when you attend worship?

54. How important is accurate accounting and complete transparency with the things of God?

55. There is nothing like the feeling of a job well done. What tasks are on your agenda for today or this week that will require care and accountability?

Have you felt God speaking to you concerning the things he has placed under your care?

If so, specifically what has he said?

Are you preparing and carrying out these assignments in a different way after studying Ezra 7 and 8?

# Biblical References

Day 1

## **Question 6 - Daniel 1:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—

<sup>4</sup> young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.<sup>5</sup> The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. <sup>6</sup> Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Mesach; and to Azariah, Abednege.

Day 2

## **Question 15 - Luke 11:28**

<sup>28</sup> He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

## **Romans 2:13**

<sup>13</sup> For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

## **John 13:17**

<sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

## **Proverbs 3:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

## **Proverbs 30:5**

<sup>5</sup> Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

## **Psalms 119:105, 160**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

<sup>160</sup> All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

## **Question 20 - Genesis 2:15**

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

## **Colossians 3:23-24**

<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

## **1 Corinthians 10:31**

<sup>31</sup> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

**Day 3**

**Question 23 - Malachi 3:10-12**

<sup>10</sup>Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. “Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. <sup>11</sup>I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>12</sup>“Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.

**Day 4**

**Question 35 - Matthew 28:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”