

Ezra

■ A study of Ezra 7

LESSON

7

DAY ONE

Ezra

Read Ezra 7:1-10.

1. How far can Ezra's lineage be traced back?
2. Read Exodus 40:12-16 to learn the background to Question 1 and summarize.
3. Phinehas in this genealogy was also very important to Ezra's background. What did he do, and what was he promised according to Numbers 25:10-13?
4. How is Ezra described in Ezra 7:6a and 10?
5. List the three specific things to which Ezra devoted himself according to verse 10.
6. Are we admonished to follow these three observances of Ezra? Record the following verses to help you with your answer.

Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Psalm 119:129-130

Proverbs 24:3-4

2 Timothy 2:15

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Psalm 37:18

*The days of the blameless
are known to the LORD,
and their inheritance
will endure forever.*

(NIV)

7. What special favor from God did Ezra have according to verse 6 and 9?

8. Is the hand of God in this context mentioned elsewhere in the Bible? Look up these scriptures and record.

Genesis 49:24

2 Chronicles 6:4

After Ezra 6, there is 58-year period of silence explained in Ezra 7 by the phrase *after these things*. During this time the events of the book of Esther took place in Babylon. In Jerusalem the excitement of the Temple completion had worn off. Nothing was being done to rebuild Jerusalem's walls or gates. The people were farming the land, enjoying their own homes and the Temple worship. They were beginning to compromise the separateness from the Gentiles around them and were intermarrying. The Law was being neglected and not taught. The excitement was gone.

Also evident in the first sentence of Ezra 7 is the reign of a new king, Artaxerxes. Darius had been most successful during his reign and brought many territories under his domain. He was a capable administrator who organized his empire in satraps, or provinces. Each had a governor appointed by Darius to whom local government was responsible.

Darius was succeeded by his son Xerxes I, who is named Ahasuerus in the Bible. He reigned 22 years before being assassinated; he was succeeded to the throne by Artaxerxes I, his younger son. Artaxerxes had killed the rightful heir, and under his leadership the Persian Empire began to slowly crumble.

This is the point at which Ezra entered the scene. He was held in high esteem by King Artaxerxes and may have had a position of leadership such as "Secretary of Jewish Affairs." He desired to return to Jerusalem, feeling God was calling him to fulfill a need there. He must have requested permission to return and was rewarded with something like a letter of recommendation outlining all the conditions of his return.

Ezra had studied and prepared for his moment in history. He believed it was not enough just to study, but one must also obey the Word. To simply study would be like seeing *through a glass, darkly* (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV). Neither did he believe it was enough to obey without studying. What if one obeyed the wrong teaching? Finally, when he did study to know the Word and then obey it, Ezra felt it was his responsibility to teach it to others. So Ezra's job was to be priest now that the Temple was built. He hoped to call the people back to study and obedience and put some enthusiasm in their spiritual lives. Ezra was faithful to this calling and therefore *the hand of the LORD his God was on him* (verse 6).

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Write out Psalm 37:18 two or three times as preparation for memorizing it this week.