

## Lesson 13

# Ezra Trusted God

**Ezra 7:1–8:36**

### Memory Verse

“For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name”  
(Psalm 33:21)

### Teacher’s Objective

At the end of the session, the students should be able to:

### Define *Levite*

**Locate** Jerusalem and Babylon on a map

**Describe** how Ezra and the others trusted that God would protect them on their journey

**Express** in their own words how they will trust God to watch over them

### Materials Needed

See “Teaching Activities” for specific details

## Teacher’s Bible Study

The book of Ezra tells the story of how God fulfills His promise to return His people to the Land of Promise. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians in about 586 B.C. As we have learned earlier, the citizens of Judah were carried away as captives. They resettled in the pagan city of Babylon. Approximately 70 years later the Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonians. God has now set the stage for His people to return to their homeland.

Just as in the past, the Israelites longed for their homeland. In their sadness, they turned their direction once again toward God. Lamentations is a book of poetry. While in Babylon, the following was written as an illustration of just how miserable they were:

“How lonely sits the city That was full of people! How like a widow is she, Who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces Has become a slave...The joy of our heart has ceased; Our dance has turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! Because of this our heart is faint; Because of these things our eyes grow dim; Because of Mount Zion which is desolate, With foxes walking about on it” (Lamentations 1:1; 5:15–22, NKJV).

There were three groups who returned to their homeland. When the first group left Babylon they were led by Zerubbabel. They rebuilt the temple and brought back sacrificing. The second group was led by Ezra. His job was to help furnish the Temple and rebuild the spiritual condition of the people. The third return was led by Nehemiah. Nehemiah’s job was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and, just as Ezra did, lead the people back to God.

Ezra was a skilled teacher, priest and scribe of the Law (Ezra 7:21) While Ezra is not referred to in the book as having written it, he has been presumed to be the author. One reason for this is he refers to himself in the first person (Ezra 7:27–9:15). The events in the book of Esther took place between the events recorded in Ezra 6 and Ezra 7.

Ezra was a man of tremendous character. While he and his family were among those who stayed in Persia during the first return to the homeland, he did not practice pagan Babylonian worship. He was a man of courage and integrity. He was not like the self-seeking Mordecai. He was a man that took responsibility for his own promotions. He believed in the preservation of the Law. Ezra had “prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord” (Ezra 7:10).

## Presenting the Bible Story

### Ezra 7:1–5

*Ezra's genealogy of traced back to Aaron*

“After these things” refers to a gap of many years between the events in chapter six and the beginning of chapter 7. In 515 B.C. the Temple was completed. The Temple was built during the reign of Darius I. After he died, his son Xerxes ruled for 20 years. Because Xerxes was mentioned in the book of Esther, it is believed that the events that occurred in the book of Esther happened between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.

### Ezra 7:6

Ezra was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses. *Teacher* means scribe, secretary, recorder. It also referred to someone who could read and write (Jeremiah 36:23). In every aspect, Ezra was a student of the Law. Four times in the book of Ezra he is called a teacher. In the book of Nehemiah he is called a scribe six times.

### Ezra 7:7–10

*Ezra studied God's Word, obeyed His Word and taught it to others*

There is no mention of Ezra and the others preparing for their journey back to Jerusalem. However, we do know that it was during the seventh year of the king's rule over Babylon. Their journey took about four months (Nisan 1 to Ab 1). This second return occurred in 458 B.C.

### Ezra 7:11–12

In the Scriptures, there is no reason given for the decree. It can only be guessed that Ezra must have asked for permission to take a group back to Jerusalem and Artaxerxes granted that request.

### Ezra 7:13-26

They were given the freedom to return to Jerusalem, offer sacrifices on the altar at the Temple; and make their own decisions. They were also given silver and gold, and articles of worship for the Temple. Ezra was to administer justice to all the people of the area. What did the king want in return for all this freedom? He wanted peace.(Ezra 7:23).

### Ezra 7:27–28

### Ezra 8:1-14

Ezra responds to all of this by praising and giving God the glory for making the king's heart want to beautify the Temple, and for giving Ezra favor in front of the king's advisers. “The hand of the Lord my God was upon me” (Ezra 7:6,9,28).

### Ezra 8:15–20

Ezra 8:1–14 is a list of those who returned to Jerusalem.

### Ezra 8:21-30

Levites were the descendants of Levi, the son of Jacob and Leah. Levi was the tribe from which all the priests came. These scriptures do not really indicate why the Levites were reluctant to return to Jerusalem. Perhaps it was due to the tremendous responsibility they would face in reestablishing Temple worship. The location of Casiphia is no longer known. Once all the Levite teachers were gathered, Ezra was ready to prepare for the journey.

### Ezra 8:31–36

The preparations included prayer and fasting. Ezra didn't want to ask for a military escort because he had already publicly said that God would take care of His people. Nehemiah, on the other hand, when he returned to Jerusalem asked for an escort (Nehemiah 2:9). Physical preparations were made. Key men were responsible for the various valuables that were given.

## Art and Activities

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, they rested three days. During that time everything was turned over to the Levites. This story ends on a very high note. It was so evident that God's hand was on His people that the other people of the land helped the Jewish community.

## Teaching Activities

Explore with your students the following questions:

### Young children

Provide your students with the appropriate Activity Page.

### Older children

Provide your students with the appropriate Activity Page.

## Explore the Subject

Always close your class with prayer

1. It was 900 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. How long did it take Ezra and the others to make this journey? (4 months)
2. How did they travel during Bible times? (Walk, camels, donkeys)
3. Was it a dangerous journey for them?
4. What made it dangerous?
5. What does it mean the "hand of the Lord his God" was upon Ezra?
6. Who were the Levites?

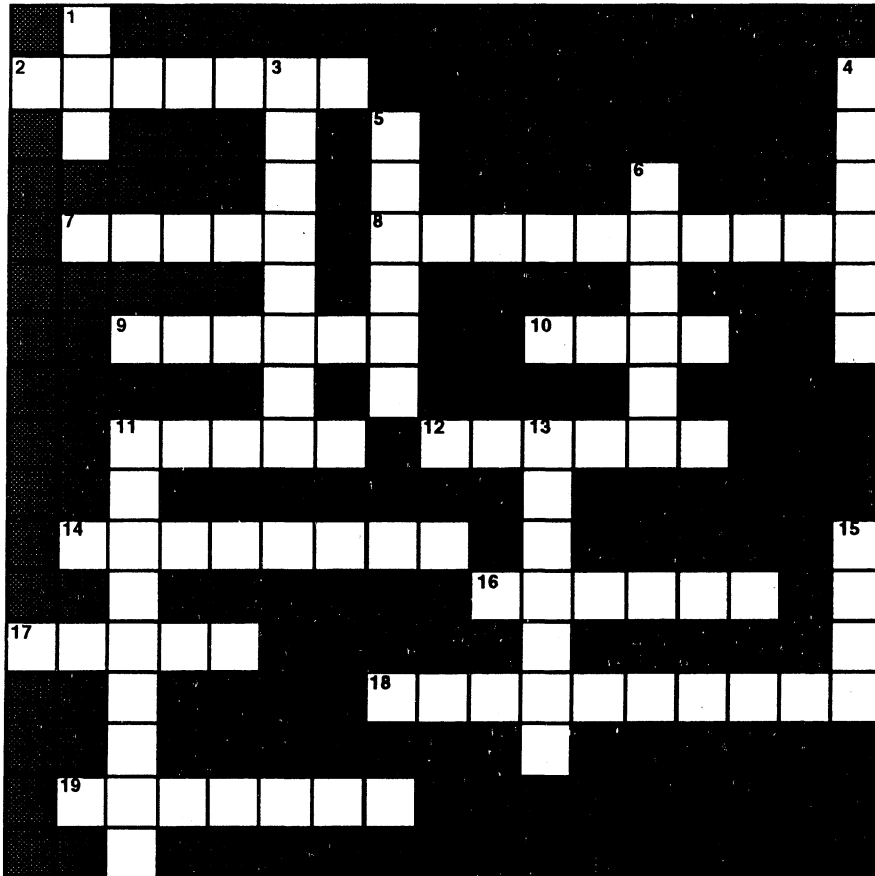
## Respond and Reinforce

1. Several weeks ago we talked about how Abraham was faithful. Does anyone remember the memory verse? It was about commitment and trust. This same verse applies to our story today (Psalm 37:5).
2. Discuss memory verse.

# Activity Page

## Ezra Trusted God

Ezra 7:1–8:36



### Across

2. The chief city of ancient Mesopotamia.
7. Freedom from war; state of harmony and quiet.
8. King of Persia (see Ezra 7:1).
9. Professional copyist.
10. Jewish scribe and prophet (see Ezra 7:6).
11. A person appointed to hear and decide cases of law in court.
12. A white metallic element used as a commodity.
14. Wealth, riches, or goods accumulated in the form of money, jewels, etc.
16. Ability to apply knowledge, experience or common sense.
17. Prince of Egypt; led the children of Israel out of Egypt.
18. To perceive or comprehend.
19. A container used to hold liquids or other contents.

### Down

1. The principles and regulations given by a government or an authority.
3. Something offered in worship or devotion.
4. Artaxerxes was king of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Artaxerxes made a decree unto the God of \_\_\_\_\_ (see Ezra 7:21).
6. A formal order having the force of law.
11. The holy city \_\_\_\_\_.
13. A member of the tribe of Levi; appointed to assist the Temple priests.
15. A precious yellow metallic element; considered of great value.

Across: 2. Babylon; 7. Peace; 8. Artaxerxes; 9. Scribe; 10. Ezra; 11. Judge; 12. Silver; 14. Treasure; 16. Wisdom; 17. Moses; 18. Understand; 19. Vessels. Down: 1. Law; 3. Offering; 4. Persia; 5. Heaven; 6. Decree; 11. Jerusalem; 13. Levites; 15. Gold.

# Activity Page

## Ezra Trusted God

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Find the words hidden in the puzzle below. The words can be found running up, down, backwards, forwards, and diagonally.



ARTAXERXES

PERSIA

EZRA

BABYLON

SCRIBE

MOSES

LAW

CHILDREN

PRIESTS

HEAVEN

PEACE

DECREE

BULLS

RAMS

LAMBS

OFFERING

JERUSALEM

LEVITES

WISDOM

JUDGE

UNDERSTAND

VESSEL

GOLD

WILL

TREASURE

HOUSE

PROVINCE

# Activity Page

## Ezra Trusted God

Ezra 7:1–8:36

Color the picture of the priest



Activity Page

**Ezra Trusted God**

Ezra 7:1–8:36

Color the picture.

