

Ezra

Objective

To learn about the character of Ezra the priest and scribe and to learn from his example

References

Ezra – Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Commentary on the Whole Bible – Matthew Henry

The Holy Bible

Scriptural Verse

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra 7:10

Lesson Guidelines

The Setting

- The return of the Israelites from exile – 1st group with Zerubabel c.538 BC
- A second group with Ezra about 80 years later
- Ezra was appointed to teach the law of Moses in his homeland, to appoint judges and rebeautify the recently rebuilt temple

The Character

- Ezra was a priest, a Levite, and a direct descendant of Aaron
- He was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses

What can we learn from him?

1. A man with a goal and purpose in life.
 - He remained a priest and learned the law of the Lord while in a foreign land. He remained focused on his goal and calling in life which was to serve God, and was able to continue work even though he was in Babylon.
2. Ezra prepared himself to serve God.
 - Any work done for God must be preceded by a period of preparation and sanctification, a period where one lets go of desires, habits and sins because they antagonize the work of God.
3. He had a deep love for others and sense of responsibility.
 - He bore on himself the guilt of Israelite sin as if it were his own. He cried and offered repentance.
 - This is the call of every Christian – to suffer with any suffering member in the body of Christ and to pray for each member as one prays for himself (Heb. 13:3).
4. Leading by example.
 - Ezra brought about the repentance of the people not by many words but by leading them in prayer and prostrations
 - Josephus the historian says that when the people saw Ezra in such a state they too repented.
5. The importance of dialogue.
 - Ezra listened to the people and how they proposed to solve the problem concerning their marriage from other nations. He could have taken matters in his own hands, nevertheless, he respected each person and listened.

- We too must listen to others, respect their desires and wants, and not have a condescending attitude.
6. Ezra always gave glory to God.
- He attributed everything that happened in his life to the good hand of the Lord that was upon him (Ezra 7:6, 9) and therefore was a true and faithful servant.
 - In order for us to be true servants of God we must allow His Glory to shine in our lives and not strive after bringing glory to ourselves.

Conclusion

Ezra is a wonderful example for all Christians. He lived a purpose driven life, serving the Lord, through his love and compassion to the people. He was a strong yet humble leader.

Discussion Points/Activities

1. What struck you the most about Ezra's character?
2. What are important characteristics that all Christians should have?
3. What are important characteristics of a leader?
4. Do you think it was necessary for Ezra to prepare himself to lead the people?
5. What should periods of preparation entail?
6. There are many examples of Christians bearing the guilt of others as if it were their own (including our Lord, Himself), do you think this is something attainable?