

When Believers Set Their Hearts Right

International Bible Lesson

Ezra 7:6-10 & Ezra 8:21-23

Sunday, July 21, 2013

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“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10—KJV).

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10—NRSV).

Ezra requested and received a commission from the king of Persia to lead a great exodus of exiles from Babylon to Judea. Then Ezra recruited priests and other Levites to help him deliver expensive gifts from the king to the temple in Jerusalem. By following known trade routes, often patrolled by bandits, they safely traveled 900 miles in four months and arrived in Jerusalem without any losses, “for the gracious hand of his God was upon him” (Ezra 7:9). God’s hand directed and protected Ezra, but not like a puppet on strings. Rather, Ezra responded to God’s call upon his life by setting his heart to study, obey, and teach the Law of the Lord. Because Ezra loved the Lord and His Word, his chief desire or goal in life became learning and doing the will of God. Ezra had more than a simple academic interest in studying and teaching the Law of the Lord; he also set his heart on obeying and leading others to obey the Scriptures. As he studied and better understood the will of God, he chose to apply and obey all of the new truths he learned as he learned them. His knowledge of God and His purposes improved as he continued to obey the truth of God. Ezra gained greater authority and credibility as others watched him practice what he preached. As he prayed and studied, God directed him to call His people to repent and return to obeying God. Eventually, reports of his works and some of his words became a part of the Scriptures he loved.

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Thinking Further

1. What was Ezra's occupation? Why is this important?
2. How long did it take Ezra and those who accompanied him to travel to Jerusalem?
3. Who did Ezra and the Book of Ezra credit for their freedom to return to Judah from exile and for the help they received?
4. What did the Book of Ezra say about Ezra's heart? How might you restate what was said about Ezra's heart so you could apply it to a Christian living today?
5. What reason did Ezra give for not asking the king for a band of soldiers to conduct them safely to Jerusalem? Then, what did Ezra do before he departed with God's people for Jerusalem?