

Ezra Sent to Teach the People

Key Verse: *“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, New King James Version

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 7:1-28

OUR KEY VERSE IDENTIFIES three principles leading to faithfulness in ministering to God’s people. Ezra had: 1) prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD; 2) done what the law commanded; and 3) conscientiously taught God’s law to Israel.

The Lord moved the Persian king, Artaxerxes, in his heart to bless Ezra and his people. Ezra’s appointment to take the lead in distributing Artaxerxes’

support was doubtless the result of his lifelong devotion to the laws of God. Ezra testified to this effect, “Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me.”—Ezra 7:27,28, NKJV

Ezra’s three qualities made him the right man for the work at hand. First, he had prepared his heart to seek knowledge of God’s law. This is also important to the Christian. We must keep our heart “with all diligence,”

for out of it “spring the issues of life.” “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 10:10, *NKJV*) An intellectual grasp of the divine law is not sufficient. A deep appreciation of God’s ways must reside in the heart also.

The second quality commending Ezra for God’s service was faithfulness in doing what was commanded. So it must be with us. James admonished, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:22-25, *NKJV*) Let us strive daily to be “doers” of God’s Word.

The third quality exhibited by Ezra was fidelity in teaching God’s principles. Ezra did not flinch at the prospect of offending some by what God’s law required. On one occasion, for example, he boldly told the people of Israel that they must not take foreign wives or husbands, nor even seek the prosperity of those from other lands! (Ezra 9:10-15) There was no way to make this palatable to those who had sinned in that manner. Our Father in heaven sometimes asks us to do things that are not pleasing to the fleshly mind. Yet, his commands are not unreasonable. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”—I John 5:2,3, *NKJV*

With these lessons thus in mind, let us be like faithful Ezra—daily preparing our hearts to seek God’s will, faithfully doing it to the best of our ability, and teaching it to others by word and by example. ■