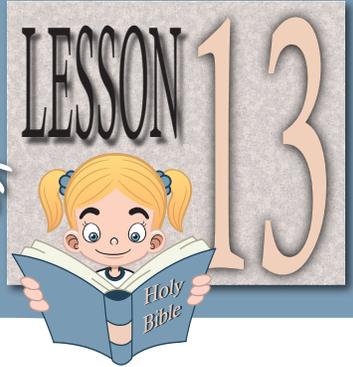
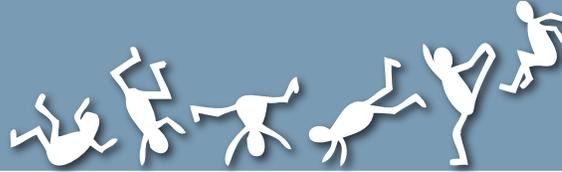


Ezra Teaches God's Law



The Book of Ezra



Old Testament 8
Part 2: Exile and Post-Exile

SUNDAY MORNING

Old Testament 8 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Ezra; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Nehemiah 8:1-8

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "I will not forget Your Word" (Psalm 119:16b).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Three Good Men"](#)
- ["Read Your Bible; Pray Everyday"](#)
- ["The B-I-B-L-E"](#)
- ["Wise Kids"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [The Divided Kingdom 2 Bible fact cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 8 Bible Facts")
- "Summary of the Bible" from ["Kids Prep"](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- ["Maps of Babylonian and Persian Empires in Daniel's Time"](#) (provided in map section of curriculum Web site)
- Ezra and Nehemiah A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: I need to read God’s Word every day and obey it (put into practice what I read).

OLDER CHILDREN: It is important for me to support (pray for, give money to) missionaries, preachers, and brotherhood organizations who tell others about Jesus. But I must never forget that God expects **me** to be responsible for my own study, and He expects **me** to live like His Word tells me to. No one can read and understand the Bible **for** me. No one can obey God’s Word **for** me. I must make that decision for myself while I’m young so that as I get older I will know how God wants me to handle problems that come my way.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

What brave queen did we talk about last week? What did she do that was so brave?

Bring a suitcase to set out as a visual. Ask the children if they have ever been on a long trip. Talk about the things you might take on a trip. (You may even want to “pack” or “unpack” a few things in your suitcase as you talk.) Talk about how sometimes it feels like you will never get to your destination. Many of God’s people left Babylon and went on a very long trip back to Jerusalem. Even though they were very excited to go back to Jerusalem, they still made bad choices and did not always obey God.

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review previous lessons in this quarter, focusing on the main characters’ knowledge of and obedience to God’s Word.

What do you think would have happened if Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego had not studied God’s Law and/or had not obeyed it? How would what the Bible says about them be different? Does God expect us to study His Word and obey it? Today we are going to talk about another man who was determined to do right and to help God’s people to do right.

HISTORICAL NOTE: The book of Ezra continues the story of the Jews, following the story recorded in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. It contains almost all that is known of Jewish history between 538 B.C. (when Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon) and 457 B.C. (when Ezra arrived in Jerusalem). The book briefly describes the return of many Jews from Babylon to Palestine as well as the rebuilding of the Temple. The inspired author of the book had four main purposes: (1) to remind the Jews that God had fulfilled His promises to restore the land He had given them hundreds of years earlier; (2) to remind the Jews of their covenant with God to be holy people, completely separate from the idol-worshipping nations around them; (3) to help provide God’s people with godly leadership; and (4) to teach them God’s Law and the importance of protecting and obeying it. (cont.)





HISTORICAL NOTE (cont.): The book of Ezra covers about 78 years, but it does not give a continuous description of events. There are at least two large gaps in the sequence of events, and at least one passage (Ezra 4:7-23) is not in chronological order. “There is an interval of [over] 50 years between the last events in the previous historical writings and the events of Ezra. Both Kings and Chronicles close with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the deportation of many of its inhabitants into Babylonia. There, they were settled in colonies, and were not mistreated as long as they were quiet subjects. Many of them prospered so well that when, later, they had an opportunity to return to their homeland, they chose not to do so. Since the Temple was destroyed, they could not carry on their sacrificial system; but they continued such religious ordinances as the Sabbath and circumcision, and gave great attention to the study of the Law” [*The Living Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, page 690].

The Persian kings of this time period were Cyrus (538 B.C.), Darius (521-486 B.C.), and Artaxerxes I (464-424 B.C.).

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem and taken control of all of Judah. He had destroyed the Temple and sent large groups of Jews from Palestine to Babylon. The Jews were held captive in Babylon for 70 years, as Jeremiah had said they would be (because of their great disobedience to God). During that time, the powerful king of Persia, Cyrus, had taken over the Babylonian empire. He decided to let the Jews return to Palestine (Judah) if they wanted to go. Many Jews had become very comfortable in Babylonia and did not want to face the hardships of rebuilding Jerusalem and the rest of their homeland. Many of the original captives had died, and their children (born in captivity) did not know anything about Palestine. 42,360 were in the first group who decided to return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who had been appointed governor of Palestine (Nehemiah 7:66-73).



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the article “[Cyrus the Great: King of Persia](#)” by Wayne Jackson on the Apologetics Press Web site for a discussion of Cyrus, archaeology, and the Bible.

2. The Jews who did return were faced with many problems, not the least of which was continual interference and harassment by idol worshipping people around them. The Jews started rebuilding the Temple with a great deal of enthusiasm and did finish the work on the Temple—though it was not nearly as grand as before it was destroyed. But over time they listened to their enemies (mainly the Samaritans) more than paying attention to God and His promises, and they stopped rebuilding the rest of Jerusalem. They gradually became more and more like the pagans around them. They married idol worshippers and stopped worshipping God. [See Malachi 1:6-14; 2:11; 3:5. During that time, the prophets Haggai (during the rebuilding of the Temple) and Zechariah did their best to help the people focus on what they needed to do, without much success.]
3. Years passed, and the Jews in Palestine were becoming more and more like the people who were supposed to be their enemies. Finally, another Persian king, Artaxerxes I, gave Ezra, a priest and scribe, permission to return to Jerusalem. Ezra wanted to go and teach the Jews God’s Law again, because he had heard about the way his people were living. Ezra had been taught the Law very well, and he was very sad that the Jews were ignoring what God had told them to do.

4. King Artaxerxes wanted to help Ezra, so he sent gold and silver, salt, grain, oil, wine, and garments for the priests who agreed to go. The king said that anyone who refused to listen to Ezra’s teaching would be severely punished. Ezra took about 1,500 Jewish men with him, not counting 250 priests. The king offered to send Persian soldiers to protect Ezra and the others on their long and dangerous journey, but Ezra refused the king’s offer. Ezra wanted the men with him, and the Persians, too, to understand that **God** would protect them. To prepare for their journey, they camped near a river for three days, praying and fasting.
5. When they finally reached Jerusalem (after about four months of travel), Ezra could see for himself the terrible condition of Jerusalem—and the even worse spiritual condition of the Jews. The Jews had not been teaching the Law to their children (Nehemiah 13:24), and they had not finished rebuilding Jerusalem. When he found out how many Jewish men had married idol-worshipping women, he became so upset that he tore his clothes and pulled at his hair. He was so upset that the Jews had not kept God’s Law that he spent all day praying and weeping; a number of the Jews gathered around him. At the evening sacrifice, Ezra prayed for the Jews and begged for God to forgive them. [Most of Ezra 9 is his anguished prayer to God.]
6. Many of the Jewish men realized what they had done and promised to “put away their foreign women and children” (i.e., not live with them any longer). Ezra went into a room of the Temple and continued “mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles” (Ezra 10:6b).

NOTE: For three months, Ezra held a “divorce court” so that the Jewish men could “put away” their idol-worshipping wives. If the children ask about this, explain that the Israelites had been forbidden by God to marry the pagans of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:3-5). Besides the fact that they would be influenced individually to forsake God, He was concerned that the physical nation of Israel would cease to be a set apart group of people—the holy descendants of Abraham, through whom He had promised to bless the world (through Jesus). Now that Jesus has come, the latter reason is no longer in effect. It is still unwise for Christians to marry non-Christians because of the danger of being spiritually corrupted (1 Corinthians 15:33), but it has not been deemed by God as a reason worthy of divorce under the New Covenant.

Make sure the children understand that the “foreign women” were not acceptable to God because they worshipped idols—not because of their skin color or “race.”

7. An announcement was made to all the Jews that they were to come to Jerusalem three days later. [Several thousand poor and/or older Jews had been left in the area when Jerusalem was destroyed. The people summoned by Ezra would no doubt have been the survivors of that group and their children, etc.] All the Jewish men came to Jerusalem and stood in the open square at the front of the Temple, in heavy rain, to hear what God wanted them to do.
8. Ezra worked with the Jews for several years, teaching them about God’s Word. At one time, the people stood outside from early in the morning until the middle of the day, listening as Ezra read the Law to them. He read God’s Word to them and taught them what it meant (Nehemiah 8:1-8). Because of Ezra’s efforts, and the efforts of others who helped him, most of the Jews listened and decided to repent and obey God’s Law again.
9. Ezra was a like a missionary, going to a faraway place to teach people about God’s Word. But the people he went to were his own people—Jews who should have known God’s Word but had chosen to ignore it. We can and must help missionaries go to other places to teach God’s



Word, but we must remember that it is our individual responsibility to study the Bible, practice what we learn from it every day, and teach people that live in our own cities, on our own blocks, and in our own schools. We cannot be pleasing to God if we think only “other people” need to learn about Him and His Word, that only “other people” need to obey Him, and that only “other people” need to go teach the lost.



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the article “[There is Still Hope for Israel](#)” by Dave Miller on the Apologetics Press Web site for a discussion of Ezra and its relevance today.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

Ages 2-5:

- “[Ezra Prays Coloring Sheet](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- Provide each child with a picture of Ezra to color. Help each student to glue it on a piece of poster board (9” x 12” for example). Ahead of time, punch out the shape of a large “E” on the side where the picture is to be glued. Give each child a shoestring or piece of yarn to “sew” the “E”.
- Write the word “BIBLE” in one or two different languages. Help the children write (or trace) “BIBLE” in English underneath them. Have Bibles in different languages to show the children. (“[Bible Word Activity](#)” provided in activity sheets)
- Soap Bible Craft: Cut black felt to cover the front, back, and one side (the long side—the “spine”) of a small bar of soap; provide one bar and one piece of felt per child. Help the children glue the felt to the soap. Provide gold or yellow sticky letters that spell “Bible” for the children to stick to the fronts of their soap Bibles—or type the word “Bible” on small pieces of paper which they can glue to the fronts of their “Bibles.”
- Take a long walk around the church building, discussing the long journey the Jews had to make as they returned to Jerusalem. Have a place to stop, share a snack (very basic, such as grapes or raisins, unleavened bread, cheese, water), and read a few verses, such as Deuteronomy 12:28; 13:4; 15:4b-5; 7:6; Ezra 8:3,22b.
- Discuss with the children the importance of reading the Bible **every** day. Make a chart for each child to take home to keep track of how often they read their Bibles. On the top of the chart, print/copy “I will read my Bible every day!” Send a letter home with the charts asking parents to let their child read (or the parents read to them) from the Bible each day and put a sticker on their chart each time they read. (“[Bible Reading Calendar](#)” provided in activity sheets)

1st-2nd Graders:

- Provide paper for the children to write notes to the missionaries your congregation supports and/or to your preachers thanking them for their hard work. Let the kids decorate their cards as time allows.
- Talk with the children about what they would take with them if they moved to a faraway place. Talk about meeting new friends, going to a new school and a new congregation. Talk with them about God’s people in the Old Testament, the Jews, being taken from their homes and forced to live in a faraway land as slaves—then many years later being given the chance to go back to their

homeland.

- Spray shaving cream on paper plates, one for each child. Show them key words from the lesson that you have written on sentence strips or construction paper. Ask the children to copy/write each word in their shaving cream. (They can smooth the shaving cream over after each word and start over. Example words: Ezra, Bible, Law, obey, etc.)
- [“Bible Numbers Activity”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe with review questions from this and previous lessons ([“Tic-Tac-Toe Instructions,”](#) board, and [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) provided in activity sheets)
- Discuss with the children the importance of reading the Bible **every** day. Make a chart for each child to take home to keep track of how often they read their Bibles. On the top of the chart, print/copy “I will read my Bible every day!” Send a letter home with the charts asking parents to let their child read (or the parents read to them) from the Bible each day and put a sticker on their chart each time they read. ([“Bible Reading Calendar”](#) provided in activity sheets)

3rd-4th Graders:

- Provide paper for the children to write notes to the missionaries your congregation supports and/or to your preachers thanking them for their hard work. Let the kids decorate their cards as time allows.
- Have the children make large magnets or doorknob hangers of the memory verse (or a reminder to read their Bibles every day).
- [“Bible Numbers Activity”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe with review questions from this and previous lessons ([“Tic-Tac-Toe Instructions,”](#) board, and [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) provided in activity sheets)
- Discuss with the children the importance of reading the Bible EVERY day. Encourage/ challenge them to read every day, possibly reading the book of Ezra by next Sunday. ([“Bible Reading Calendar”](#) provided in activity sheets)
- Have the children read the following:
 - Ezra. [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Ezra quiz from AP’s [Advanced Bible Reader](#) site for the children to take.
 - *Discovery* magazine article: “Making Sense of God’s Word,” [October, 2005](#) (see also the cover of that issue)
 - *Zerubbabel Rebuilds the Temple*, by Larry Burgdorf, Arch books (DISCLAIMER: skip the note to parents)

SONGS:

“THREE GOOD MEN” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

(Tune: “Three Blind Mice”)

Three good men, three good men,
Came back home, came back home.
The Temple was repaired by Zerubbabel,
The Law was repeated by Ezra, and
Then Nehemiah rebuilt the walls.
They’re three good men.

“READ YOUR BIBLE, PRAY EVERYDAY” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

(Tune: See Internet)

If you read your Bible and pray everyday, you’ll grow, grow, grow. (REPEAT)

Grow, grow, grow, grow,

Grow, grow, grow.

If you read your Bible and pray everyday, you’ll grow, grow, grow.

(Make hand movements as if reading, praying, and like a child growing.)

If you neglect your Bible and forget to pray, you’ll shrink, shrink, shrink.

(Make hand movements as if closing Bible, head gesture saying “No,” and like a child shrinking.)

(REPEAT)

Shrink, shrink, shrink, shrink,

Shrink, shrink, shrink.

If you neglect your Bible and forget to pray, you’ll shrink, shrink, shrink.

(Make hand movements as if closing Bible, head gesture saying “No,” and like a child shrinking.)

So read your Bible and pray everyday, and you’ll grow, grow, grow.

(Make hand movements as if reading, praying, and like a child growing.) (REPEAT)

Grow, grow, grow, grow,

Grow, grow, grow.

So read your Bible and pray everyday, and you’ll grow, grow, grow.

(Make hand movements as if reading, praying, and like a child growing.)

“THE B-I-B-L-E” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Traditional

The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me!

I stand alone on the Word of God,

The B-I-B-L-E.

The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me!

I read and study and then obey,

The B-I-B-L-E.

“WISE KIDS” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

(Tune: “The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock”)

Wise kids read their Bibles every day.

(open hands like book)

Wise kids read their Bibles every day.

Wise kids read their Bibles every day,

And we trust upon the Lord! (point to heaven)

Wise kids learn to pray every day.
(fold hands in prayer)
Wise kids learn to pray every day.
Wise kids learn to pray every day,
And they wait upon the Lord! (point to heaven)

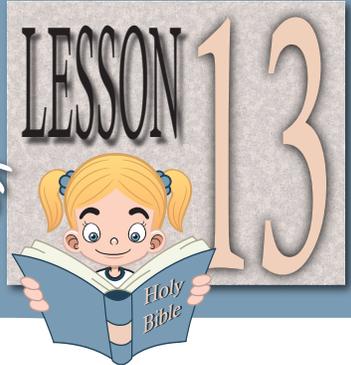
So read your Bible, pray, and you'll be wise. (open hands like book, then fold in prayer)
So read your Bible, pray and you'll be wise.
So read your Bible, pray and you'll be wise,
No matter what your size!

*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

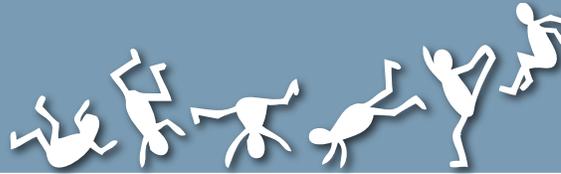
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Ezra Teaches God's Law



The Book of Ezra



Old Testament 8
Part 2: Exile and Post-Exile

WEDNESDAY EVENING

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Ezra; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Nehemiah 8:1-8

MEMORY WORK:

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OLDER CHILDREN: "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34).

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- Ezra and Nehemiah A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: I need to read God's Word every day and obey it (put into practice what I read).

OLDER CHILDREN: It is important for me to support (pray for, give money to) missionaries, preachers, and brotherhood organizations who tell others about Jesus. But I must never forget that God expects **me** to be responsible for my own study, and He expects **me** to live like His Word tells me to. No one can read and understand the Bible **for** me. No one can obey God's Word **for** me. I must make that decision for myself while I'm young so that as I get older I will know how God wants me to handle problems that come my way.

INTRODUCTION:

Review [O.T. 8 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 8 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Review Sunday's lesson. (See [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) for example questions.)

Spend time reviewing the names of the books of the Bible and/or working on the memory verse. (Example game for reviewing books of the Bible: write various books of the Bible on index cards, mix up the cards, and put them in a bag or basket. Let the children take turns drawing cards, then saying the books that come before and after the book written on their cards.)

YOUNGER CHILDREN: Write key words from the story on index cards and hide them around the room. Give them clues about that person or thing and ask them to find the card with the word that best answers the clues. **Or** enlarge a page from the book of Ezra and have them point out those key words from the Bible. Praise them for being able to "read" the Bible. **Or** make sentences of three, four, or five words from the lesson; put one or two words on individual index cards; let the kids put the words together in a logical sentence. (Make several sentence puzzles like this; one per child would be great.)

OLDER CHILDREN: Play Bible baseball or help them learn a Bible verse in another language (or sign language).

"Bible Baseball": Before class, write questions about this and previous lessons on cards and divide cards into "single," "double," "triple," or "homerun," depending on how hard the questions are. Divide the class into two teams. Assign places for first, second, and third bases, and home plate in the classroom. When a team is "up to bat," a student selects a card and tries to answer the question. If he answers correctly, he takes that base. If he answers incorrectly, he is out. After three outs, it is the other team's turn.

Example verses (in Spanish and French):

1 John 4:8b: God is love.

1 Juan 4:8b: Dios es amor.

1 Jean 4:8b: Dieu est amour.

Daniel 6:23b: Daniel...trusted in His God.

Daniel 6:23b: Daniel...habia confiado en su Dios.

Daniel 6:24b: Daniel...avait eu confiance en son Dieu.

Psalm 119:73: Your hands made me and formed me; make me learn and understand Your commandments.

Salmo 119:73: Tus manos me hicieron y me formaron; dame entendimiento para que aprenda tus mandamientos.

Psaumes 119:73: Tes mains m'ont façonné et affermi, accorde-moi l'intelligence pour que j'apprenne tes ordonnances.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):**

- See Sunday morning's lesson.

***** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.**

