

Ezra

Scripture text: Ezra 7:28

The Bible is filled with stories of people who lived their lives under the influence of God...

1. Through deep faith and a willingness to serve, God used them to fulfill His purposes
2. Ezra is one such example of what can happen:
 - a. When a person determines to seek God
 - b. And allows the Lord to use him

In 457 B.C., Ezra led a group of Jews from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem...

1. About eighty years after a group led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple
2. The mission of Ezra's group was to restore the people of God

In the book of Ezra...

1. The first six chapters describe the work of Zerubbabel
2. The final four chapters relate Ezra's arrival and the great restoration he brought about
3. The theme of Ezra's life and work could be stated as "The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me," for six times in two chapters he thus attributes his success.
4. In our lesson, let's first notice...

A. HOW THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS UPON EZRA

1. In Receiving Requests From The King

- a. Notice Ezra 7:6
- b. Because the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra, Artaxerxes allowed him:
 - 1) To go to Jerusalem — Ezra 7:12-13
 - 2) To take silver and gold to buy animals for sacrifice — Ezra 7:14-17
 - 3) To buy what is needed for the service of the house of God — Ezra 7:18-23
 - 4) To be free from taxation — Ezra 7:24
 - 5) To set up magistrates and judges — Ezra 7:25-26
- c. Ezra recognized the hand of God was at work in his behalf! — Ezra 7:27-28

2. In Finding Servants For The Temple

- a. Prepared to leave, Ezra noted none of sons of Levi — Ezra 8:15
- b. He sends men to find some who will go with them — Ezra 8:16-17
- c. By the good hand of God upon them, they find 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim to assist them! — Ezra 8:18-20

3. In Providing Safe Journey To Jerusalem

- a. Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek from God the right way to travel — Ezra 8:21-23
- b. Having told the king that God's hand would be with them, he was ashamed to ask for a military escort — Ezra 8:22
- c. God's hand was upon them, and they safely arrived in Jerusalem! — Ezra 8:31-32

4. From beginning to end the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra.

- a. Why did Ezra enjoy the blessing of God's provision in his life?
- b. Is there anything we can glean from Ezra's story that might ensure the hand of God in our own lives?
- c. I believe there is! Let me suggest some reasons...

B. WHY THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS UPON EZRA

1. Ezra Had Prepared Himself

- a. In a summary passage, we learn why God was with him — Ezra 7:9-10
- b. God was with him "For (because) Ezra had prepared his heart..."
 - 1) "to seek the Law of the Lord" (to learn what God wanted him to do)
 - 2) "to do it" (to apply it to himself first)
 - 3) "to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (and then teach others)
- c. Ezra had first made himself useful for the Master — 2 Timothy 2:21

2. Ezra Had Sought The Lord

- a. He believed that God would be with those who seek Him — Ezra 8:22
- b. Thus he entreated God's protection through fasting and prayer — Ezra 8:21-23
- c. Ezra believed that God rewarded those who diligently seek Him; such faith undoubtedly pleased God — Hebrews 11:6

3. Ezra Was Willing To Step Out In Faith

- a. Trusting the Lord would protect them, they began their perilous journey — Ezra 8:31
- b. It was not easy, for there were enemies and potential for ambush along the way!
- c. But Ezra illustrated that he had a living, working faith!
 - 1) James 2:17, 26
 - 2) Galatians 5:6

4. Ezra Was Willing To Face Difficult Situations

- a. Upon his arrival, Ezra was faced with a difficult situation — Ezra 9:1-2
 - 1) Many of the Israelites had intermarried with Gentile women
 - 2) The rulers and leaders of Israel were the worst violators
- b. He was moved to fasting and prayer — Ezra 9:3-15

- 1) Others joined him (“everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel”)
 - 2) He offered prayer confessing the sins of Israel
- c. He accepted the responsibility that was his — Ezra 10:1-8
- 1) Encouraged by those willing to repent
 - 2) Leading the people to a great restoration!
- d. It would have been so easy to rationalize away any need for the people to change; but Ezra did not let the emotionally charged issue deter him from doing God’s will!

The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra because he...

1. Had prepared himself
2. Sought the Lord
3. Was willing to step out in faith
4. Was willing to face difficult situations

Ezra was not the only person who experienced the hand of the Lord upon him...

1. The Lord was also with a contemporary, Nehemiah — Nehemiah 2:18
2. Sometimes the hand of the Lord was for the purpose of judgment — 1 Samuel 5:6
3. But here we have considered the working of God for good in the life of his servant

How will the hand of the Lord be for us? For our good, if we emulate Ezra by...

1. Preparing ourselves to be useful to the Master!
2. Seeking the Lord with diligence and faith!
3. Stepping out in faith against the odds
4. Facing difficult issues and situations head on

Let the example of Ezra encourage us to so live in Christ, that one day we can look back at the events in our lives and say: “The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me”!

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