

3. The “Law of the Lord” in Ezra refers not just to the technical rules and statutes of the levitical ceremonial and civil law (such as the prohibition on eating pork and shellfish, the death sentence for adultery, or the sacrificing of animals for sins). When our passage refers to the law, it is talking about the first five books of the Old Testament. This included God’s covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham and the Ten Commandments that were presented to Moses. These five books tell of God’s character and the history of his relationship with his people.

a. What are the three ways Ezra approached God’s law? (v. 10)


b. Why is the order of these three things so important?

c. What does it look like for you to...
...study the Word?

...observe (that is, do) the Word?

...teach the Word?

“The New Testament gives us further guidance about how to read the Old Testament. Paul makes it clear in places like Romans 13:8ff that the apostles understood the Old Testament moral law to still be binding on us. In short, **the coming of Christ changed how we worship but not how we live.** The moral law is an outline of God’s own character—his integrity, love, and faithfulness. And so all the Old Testament says about loving our neighbor, caring for the poor, generosity with our possessions, social relationships, and commitment to our family is still in force. The New Testament continues to forbid killing or committing adultery, and all the sex ethic of the Old Testament is re-stated throughout the New Testament (Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Timothy 1:8-11.) If the New Testament has reaffirmed a commandment, then it is still in force for us today.”¹

* For more on the law, see the quote at the end of the lesson.

4. King Artaxerxes allows Ezra, and any other Israelite who desires, to leave Babylon and go to Jerusalem, showing them much favor. Which of the “gifts” bestowed by the king seem especially important to you? (vv. 14-26)

“Artaxerxes, king of kings” (v. 12)

“The phrase ‘king of kings’...[was] used by Assyrian kings...as their empires incorporated many kingdoms.... The rabbis applied to God the title ‘King of the king of kings.’”² You might want to take a look at 1 Timothy 6:14-16 and Revelation 17:14 and 19:11-16 to see how God is revealed and why he has the only true claim to the title “King of kings.”

5. Three times in this chapter Ezra is shown to have good success.
 - a. To what does Ezra attribute his success? (vv. 6, 9, 28).

 - b. What do you think it means when it says that the hand of the Lord is upon Ezra?

“The amount of silver specified has been estimated at between a quarter and a third of all the annual taxation raised in ‘Beyond the River.’ The wheat, wine, and oil would have been used for cereal offerings, for drink offerings, and for the lamp kept lit in the temple (Ex. 27:20; 29:2). The quantities would have supplied the temple’s needs for perhaps two years.”³

- c. Describe a time in your life when you knew the hand of the Lord was upon you in a similar way.

6. What does King Artaxerxes mention as one motivation for his generosity? (v. 23)

7. Ezra is instructed by the king to complete a task when he arrives in Jerusalem.
 - a. What is the task? (vv. 25-26)

- b. What does the king say should be the basis of the justice system Ezra will set up? (v. 25)

8. The last two verses of chapter seven are written in the first person and sometimes called “Ezra’s doxology.” Ezra gives praise to the Lord for all that has come to pass. For what things does Ezra give praise to the Lord? (vv. 27-28)


Something to think about...

“When the Bible says that Ezra studied ‘the Law of the Lord’ (7:10), we understand this to refer to God’s word generally. When Ezra studied the law, he was also beginning to understand the gospel, for the grace of God and the promise of Jesus Christ are taught in Ezra as much as anywhere else in the scriptures.

“Yet we also know that Ezra lived before the coming of Christ, and to that extent, we can say that he did not know the gospel—not the way we know it. He did not know the incarnation of God the son or the virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. He did not know the miracles and parables of our Lord. He did not know his sufferings and death on the cross, or his triumph over the grave. Nor did Ezra know that Jesus would perfectly fulfill his own agenda for ministry: studying the law from beginning to end, doing it with perfection, and then teaching its true meaning in Israel. ... The fullness of the ages has come in the salvation of God’s Son—what Ezra was waiting for all his life. ...

“What would happen, then, if we helped Ezra take his approach to life and ministry and bring it into relationship with Jesus Christ? For example, what if we took the word ‘law’ and replaced it with the word ‘gospel’? Not that we do not need the law anymore, because we do, but the gospel is our salvation. So what if we took [Ezra 7:10](#) and said: ‘I have set my heart to study the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to do it, and to teach the crucifixion and the resurrection in my community.’”⁴

This study has been adapted and expanded with permission from a study of the same name by Bridge Community Church, Phila., PA.

* For further study

¹ Timothy Keller (https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/old_testament_law_and_the_charge_of_inconsistency)

² Edwin Yamauchi, “Ezra, Nehemiah” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: 1 Kings–Job*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 651.

³ *ESV Study Bible*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 815, note on Ezra 7:22.

⁴ Philip Ryken, “Ezra, According to the Gospel: Ezra 7:10,” *Themelios* 33.3 (2008), 67.