



Mustard Seed Children's Lesson Summary for September 20, 2009
Released on Wednesday, September 16, 2009

"Ezra: A Priest for the People"

Lesson Text: Ezra 9:5-11, 15

Background Scripture: Ezra 9

Memory Verse: "Our iniquities (sins) are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6)

Ezra 9:5-11, 15

5 And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,
6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.
7 Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil and to confusion of face, as it is this day.
8 And now for a little space grace hath been showed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.
9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.
10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,
11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.
.....
15 O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day; behold, we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW

Teach the children that they have the opportunity to show gratitude to God by obeying His commands.

TRUTHS TO STRESS

1. God was merciful to bring the Jews back from captivity.
2. By confessing his people's sins, Ezra helped them turn to God and obey Him.
3. We can confess our sins and be forgiven because of Jesus.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Time: 458 B.C.

Place: Jerusalem

After seventy years of captivity, some of the people of Israel were allowed to return to their homeland. These Jews rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem and resumed offering sacrifices. Sadly, they still did not obey all God's laws.

About a hundred years later, Ezra got permission from the king of Persia to go to Jerusalem and take other Jews with him. The king charged him with restoring the temple worship and enforcing the laws of Moses.

When Ezra arrived, he learned that many Jews were neglecting God's laws. One particular trespass—intermarriage with Gentiles—threatened the continued existence of the nation. Ezra tore his clothes, pulled out some of his hair, and sat down in utter astonishment. After hours of grieving, he got down on his knees and began to pray. Ezra admitted that he was too ashamed to show his face to God. The sins of his people had resulted in the destruction of their city and temple and the captivity of the people.

Ezra admitted that it was his people's sinfulness that had brought them such pain, but now God had been kind to them and had let a few return from captivity. God had given them hope and a little rest from affliction. He had given them renewed vitality by letting them return and rebuild the temple. He was a wall of protection around them.

Ezra confessed that his people had again disobeyed God's laws and forfeited any right to remain in possession of the land. In essence, he was asking God to have mercy because of His love for His people, even though they did not deserve any favors.

Apparently Ezra was in the temple at this time, for many people had heard his confession and were weeping along with him. They decided not merely to confess but also to correct their faults.

It is easy to quickly confess a sin and not have any intention to forsake it or take steps to avoid it in the future, but that is not genuine confession. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh" his sins "shall have mercy."

Today many believers ignore God outside church and excuse sinful living. Those who preach righteousness often do it with proud condemnation rather than humble pleas for repentance. We need a revival. Help your students trust God to forgive them because of Jesus and then live for Him.

PLANNING LESSON AIDS

For Telling the Lesson, prepare a list as follows: "Moses," "Joshua," "Judges," "Kings," "Captivity," "Return and Repair of Temple," "Ezra."

For Helping to Remember, for each child print "Jesus Took Our Mountain of Sins" at the top of a sheet of blue construction paper, and cut a "mountain" from dark-colored paper. Bring glue and pencils or crayons.

For Lesson Activity, make a copy of the word search for each child – this activity uses key words for the lesson.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

In the Bible (Luke 7:40-43) Jesus told a story about a lender who loaned five hundred silver coins to a borrower and fifty silver coins to another. Neither borrower was able to repay the loan; so the lender forgave them both.

Jesus then asked which borrower would love the lender the most. Obviously, it was the one who was forgiven the most.

Now, if somebody had done you a really big favor even though you had been unkind to him, you would be happy to do anything for him right away.

God sent Jesus to take our punishment for sin. We should be happy to do whatever He asks because we really love Him. We would be very ungrateful if we did not.

In our lesson today, we will learn about people who received a lot from God but who were not willing to do what God asked them to do.

TELLING THE LESSON

After Moses (show list) came Joshua, the judges, and then kings to rule over Israel. During the times of the kings, the people became more and more unfaithful to God. Finally God allowed the nation to be defeated, and most of the people were taken into captivity in faraway places.

After seventy years, some of the people of Israel were allowed to return to their homeland. Now called Jews, they rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, where they again worshiped God. However, they still did not obey all God's laws.

After many more years, a Jewish man named Ezra was still living in Babylon. He got permission from the king to go to Jerusalem, and many other Jews went with him. Ezra was to make the temple a beautiful place where the people could worship God according to God's laws.

When Ezra got to Jerusalem, he found out that the Jews there were not paying much attention to God's laws. Many of them had broken one particular law that was causing them a lot of trouble - they had married people who were not Jews. This had led them to worship idols and do all kinds of bad things.

Ezra was so upset when he heard of the problem that he tore his clothes, pulled out his hair, and sat down in a daze for hours. Late in the afternoon, at the usual time for the Jews to pray and offer sacrifices, he got down on his knees and began to pray.

Ezra said, "My God, I am too ashamed to show my face to You. The sins of my people are piled as high as the sky. We are just as guilty now as we were when You let the Babylonians punish us with swords and captivity, and we still have to serve foreign kings."

It was painful for Ezra to admit that captivity had not corrected the people's sinfulness. Their sin had brought them nothing but pain; yet they still did not love God, who had been so good to them.

Ezra went on, "But now for a little time You have been kind to us and let a few of us return from captivity to live in our homeland in safety. You have given us hope and a little rest. Even though we were slaves, You have not left us. You made the king of Persia be kind to us. You have given us new life as a nation. You have let us rebuild the temple after it was destroyed. You have been like a wall around us to protect us in Jerusalem."

Ezra was thankful for all that God had done for the Jews in Jerusalem and Judah. God had not forgotten His promise to be their God and to bless their nation.

Ezra went on, "But now, O God, what can we say? For we have disobeyed Your commands that You gave through the prophets. The people around us fill the land with evil; so You commanded us not to marry them. If we had obeyed You, we would be at peace and strong in our land forever."

After naming the one sin that most threatened to put an end to Israel, Ezra continued his prayer. "Lord God of Israel, by Your goodness You have left a few of us alive today. We admit that we are guilty and are not worthy to stand before You." Ezra was asking God to have mercy because of His love for His people, even though they did not deserve any favors.

Many people had heard Ezra confessing Israel's sins. When he finished praying, they were sorry too, and they decided to correct their sins. They wanted to obey God and do what is right.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE

God has been good to us too, in spite of the fact that we are sinners. We are not fit for heaven because of our sin, but Jesus took our punishment. We should confess our sin and trust Jesus to get us to heaven.

After trusting in Jesus, we should obey what we read in the Bible. For example, Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Since God has been so kind to us, we can show how thankful we are by being kind to people He loves and forgiving them.

HELPING TO REMEMBER

Use this craft alongside Explaining the Memory Verse. Give each child a prepared sheet of paper and a mountain. Have the children glue the mountain to paper and draw a small stick figure standing next to the mountain. Print "SIN" on the mountain.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE

"Our iniquities (sins) are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6)

If the people living in Jerusalem in Ezra's day thought about their sins at all, they thought they were little. They thought going to a service at the temple would make up for their sins; then they could go and do another sin.

Ezra knew that disobeying God is very serious. He compared the sins of his people to things that are piled up high. Imagine a pile of garbage that is as high as your head. That would be a lot of garbage. Try to imagine a pile of sins that is over your head; it would take a lot of love to forgive them. Now imagine a pile of sins as high as a mountain or even as high as the sky. That is how bad things were in Ezra's time.

The only way to get rid of our sins, whether there are a few or many, is by trusting that Jesus died on the cross to take them away. Then you trust Him to give you the strength to turn away from them and not do them anymore. We will never completely keep from sinning, but we want to please Him and should do better day by day.

CONCLUSION:

If you continue reading the book of Ezra, you will learn the rest of the story. Was Israel sorry? Did the people obey God?

It is sad to learn how families in Israel had to be broken and separated. Many people's lives were affected just because the people had disobeyed God. It is the same today. God wants His people to be happy and trouble free, but sin always brings trouble. Sin causes unhappiness. Sin adds trouble. It subtracts happiness. It multiplies people's problems, and it divides families.

But we have a remedy for sin. For Israel, Ezra served in the position of priest to help the people confess their sins and turn back to God and obey Him. But when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross at Calvary and ascended into heaven, He became for us a perfect High Priest. We can now confess our own sins and be forgiven because of Jesus.

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank You that we are able to come to You in prayer and confess our sins. Thank You that we are forgiven because of Jesus. Help us to live for You and to obey Your Word, in Jesus' name. Amen.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

The next lesson is "**Nehemiah: God's Chosen Leader**" and tells how Nehemiah inspired and motivated the people of Israel to work for God. Study Nehemiah 2:1-20.

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WORD SEARCH:

“Ezra: God’s Chosen Leader” (Ezra 9:5-11, 15)

Find these keywords from the lesson text:

PRIEST	REPAIR	SWORD	REMNANT
PRAYED	INCREASED	REPENTED	GRACE
LEADER	CAPTIVITY	EZRA	CRIED
SINS	REVIVE	JUDAH	JERUSALEM

Y D E S A E R C N I I N E P I U T Z M E E V D
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L U R R N E S J L E D C E Y D T E G E R I S N
E D N E A G T T E D D R S S I D A R N C M L E

Solution to Word Search:

"Ezra: God's Chosen Leader" (Ezra 9:5-11, 15)

D E S A E R C N I
E
C
M E L A S U R E J A Y
R E T D D
G Z I E R
S I N S R V I D E Y A R P O
P R I E S T A I E R R W
T V C E S
R P J I R E P A I R
E A U V E
D C D E N R E M N A N T
A A R T
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