

## Life Group Questions w/b Sunday 31 January 2021

### Ezra – a Story of Rebuilding Week 5

#### Chapters 7-8

##### Historical Background

Chapter 6 closed with the dedication of the rebuilt Temple. The people celebrated in accordance with the format for worship given by God to Moses. This meant that they kept the Passover – a reminder of God’s goodness to them in rescuing them from Egypt; and now they are again back in the Land of Promise, and able to worship God freely.

And now in chapter 7 we finally meet the writer of the book, and the person after whom the Book of Ezra is named. He’s a well educated man of priestly lineage that goes right back to Aaron, the first High Priest – see 7:1-6a. He also has a gift for teaching the Scriptures.

##### Read: Ezra 7:6-28

Almost sixty years have passed since the dedication of the Temple. There is now a new ruler of the Persian Empire, a descendant of King Darius who we met in chapters 5 and 6, and he is called Artaxerxes. Ezra leads the second wave of returners, and they come with the blessing of this new king.

- Given that Artaxerxes is not a believer in the God of Israel, what do these verses tell us of the sovereignty of God?
- What do you notice about God’s provision in verses 6, 13-20, 21, 25, 26?
- What do these verses tell us of the character of Ezra?
- Why were his gifts well suited for this time?
- How far do you believe that God appoints people to fulfil particular roles for particular seasons? Think of some examples where this happens today.
- Look back over your own life and share times when you can remember God’s hand at work. In what ways have you known God’s calling on your life?
- In chapters 7 and 8 we find the repeated phrase ‘the gracious hand of our God was upon us’. What do you think this means?
- God’s sovereignty, God’s provision, and God’s timing in these chapters all testify to the faithfulness of God. What do you think the faithfulness of God means for us today?

### **Prayer Focus Suggestion**

Meditate on the words of the following song, or on a similar one of your choosing:

'Faithful one, so unchanging

Ageless one, you're my rock of peace

Lord of all, I depend on you.

I call out to you, again and again

I call out to you, again and again.

You are my rock in times of trouble

You lift me up when I fall down

All through the storm

Your love is, the anchor

My hope is in You alone.'

### **Further Material – only if time!**

Some scholars regard Ezra as the second Exodus.

Read Exodus 12:21-42, 50-51, and notice any similarities and differences between the two spiritual journeys and their leaders. Consider what they teach us about the nature of God, the nature of God's people, and for ourselves today.