

# The Hand Of The Lord My God

**Introduction.** The Bible is filled with stories of people who lived their lives under the influence of God. Through deep faith and a willingness to serve, God used them to fulfill His purposes. Ezra is one such example of what can happen when a person determines to seek God and allows the Lord to use him for His glory.

In 457 B.C., Ezra led a group of Jews from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem, which was about eighty years after a group was led back by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. The mission of Ezra's group was to restore the people of God.

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

## I. ***How The Hand Of The Lord Was Upon Ezra***

A. In receiving requests from the king.

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

B. In finding servants for the temple.

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

C. In providing safe journey to Jerusalem.

1. Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek from God the right way to travel (8:21-23).
2. Having told the king that God's hand would be with them, he was ashamed to ask for a military escort (8:22).
3. God's hand was upon them, and they safely arrived in Jerusalem (8:31-32).
4. From beginning to end the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra. Why

did Ezra enjoy the blessing of God's provision in his life? Is there anything we can glean from Ezra's story that might ensure the hand of God in our own lives?

## II. ***Why The Hand Of The Lord Was Upon Ezra***

- A. Ezra had prepared himself.
  - 1. In a summary passage, we learn why God was with him (7:9-10).
  - 2. God was with him "For (because) Ezra had prepared his heart:"
    - a) "To seek the law of the Lord" (to learn what God wanted him to do).
    - b) "To do it" (to apply it to himself first).
    - c) "To teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (and then teach others).
  - 3. Ezra had first made himself useful for the Master (2 Timothy 2:19-22).
- B. Ezra had sought the Lord.
  - 1. He believed that God would be with those who seek Him (8:22).
  - 2. Thus he entreated God's protection through fasting and prayer (8:21-23).
  - 3. Ezra believed that God rewarded those who diligently seek Him; such faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 John 2:5).
- C. Ezra was willing to walk by faith.
  - 1. Trusting the Lord would protect them, they began their perilous journey (8:31).
  - 2. It was not easy, for there were enemies and potential for ambush along the way.
  - 3. But Ezra embodies the living, working faith required of God's children (2 Corinthians 5:7; James 2:17, 26; Galatians 5:6).
- D. Ezra was willing to face difficult situations.
  - 1. Upon his arrival, Ezra found a difficult situation (9:1-2).
    - a) Many of the Israelites had married Gentile women.
    - b) The rulers and leaders of Israel were the worst violators.
  - 2. He was moved to fasting and prayer (9:3-15).
    - a) Others joined him.
    - b) He offered prayer confessing the sins of Israel.
  - 3. He accepted his responsibility (10:1-8).
    - a) He was encouraged by those willing to repent.
    - b) It was he that would lead the people to a great restoration.
  - 4. 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!

**Conclusion.** Ezra was not the only person who experienced the hand of the Lord upon him. The Lord was also with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:18). Sometimes the hand of the Lord was for the purpose of judgment (1 Samuel 5:6). 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 preparing ourselves to be useful to the Master, seeking the Lord with diligence and faith, walking by faith and facing difficult issues and situations.

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!"