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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.) Copyright, 1922, Western Newspaper Union.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 20.

SECOND RETURN FROM EXILE

LESSON TEXT-Ezra 7:1-8:36.

GOLDEN TEXT—The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good.

-Ezra 8:22.

REFERENCE MATERIAL—Ezra 9:1-

10:17.
PRIMARY TOPIC—Ezra's Prayer for

Help.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Ezra's Prayer for

Help on a Journey.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC

-Ezra: Teacher and Leader.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC —Religious Teachers: A Need and an Opportunity.

I. The Leader-Ezra (7:1-10).

1. Who he was (vv. 1-6. (1) A priest (vv. 1-5). The leader of the first company was Zerubbabel, a sort of military governor. The great need flow was for a religious leader, for the people had gone far from God, as we see from the noble reforms which Ezra effected. (2) A ready scribe (v. 6). He was a teacher of the law of God.

2. His high ambition vv. 7-10). (1) "He set his heart to seek the law of the Lord" (v. 10). He definitely set out with the noble purpose to know God's Word. To be successful in anything one must set out with a purpose. Daniel was a success because he "purposed in his heart." Ministers and Sunday-school teachers should have this set purpose. (2) He set his heart to obey the Lord (v. 10). He was not only concerned with knowing God's Word, but to obey it. God's Word cannot fully be known by the intellect; it must be experienced. The essential qualification for a teacher of the Bible, a preacher or Sunday-school teacher, is obedience to God's Word. (3) He set his heart to teach Israel God's statutes and judgments (v. 10). He not only had a love for God's Word, but a desire to implant it in the hearts of others. When one has an experiential knowledge of God's Word he longs to teach it to others.

3. His commission (7:11-26). The king Artaxerxes gave him a copy of the decree authorizing him to lead a company back to Jerusalem. He was empowered (1) to collect funds (vv. 15, 16); (2) to levy tribute (vv. 21, 22); (3) to appoint magistrates and judges (v. 25); (4) to execute penalties (v. 26). So great was the king's confidence in Ezra that he gave all these powers into his hand. For this great honor Ezra lifted his heart to God in thanksgiving. He was mainly concerned with the fact that he was to beautify the Lord's house and acknowledge that God had put this purpose into the king's heart.

II. The Company (8:1-20).

The company was small—only 1,754 males, but including women, children and servants, there were perhaps 6,000 to 7,000 people in this caravan.

III. Ezra's Prayer and Fasting

The first thing he did was to seek God's guidance. Not only God's leaders, but all Christians should seek divine guidance and help in every undertaking—every new Journey, every piece of new work, every business adventure, every relationship. That which we cannot invoke God's blessing upon should not be undertaken. Further, success can only be realized when God's blessing is upon us. He did not minimize the dangers attend-

ing such a Journey, but he had told the king that the hand of the Lord would be upon all for good who sought him, and now he was ashamed to ask the king for a military escort to pro-

tect them from the marauding Arabs. IV. The Successful Journey (8:24-32).

God heard their prayer. The treasure entrusted to them was great. Perhaps the entire value of all the money, etc., was \$5,000,000. For a weak caravan to go on a journey requiring four months through a country infested by these robber bands, carrying such an amount of money was most perilous; but Ezra knew that God was able and would protect them. Note:

1. The care and honesty (vv. 24-30). The money was weighed unto them at the start and was to be weighed when turned over to the authorities at Jerusalem. The incentive to honesty and strict accounting of the trust was that they were holy men and were entrusted with that which was holy because it belonged to God. Most exacting care should be exercised in handling the Lord's money. We should guard sacredly our trust.

2. Their safe arrival (vv. 31, 32). Some four and one-half months were required to make the journey. God proved himself to be faithful, having protected them and brought them safely to their destination.

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COMING to See Us!

This week a delegation of

225 FARMERS AND THEIR SONS

from Craven county are scheduled to arrive in Moore county to look over this country, and see what it is like and what we are doing in the way of farming.

These men make two stops on their journey. One at Raleigh to study the Department of Agriculture, where they stay the first night out, and the other at Pinehurst, where they stay the second day and the second night, looking over the fine herds there of Ayrshire cattle and Berkshire hogs, at the orchards, the cotton and tobacco farms, and at Moore county methods.

They will make a run around the neighborhood, taking in the Sandhill development, and go back home with a new knowledge of this part of the state.

When 225 men come that far in one bunch to look over the Sandhills you know.

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