

be answered thus? Does Luke 18:1-8 shed light on the problem? What is prayer? "Adoniram Judson prayed for entrance into India; he was compelled to go to Burmah. He prayed for his wife's life, and buried both her and his two children. He prayed for release from the king of Ava's prison, and had lain there months chained and miserable. Yet at the close of his life he said, 'I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything but it came; at some time—no matter at how distant a day—some how, in some shape—probably the last I should have devised—it came.'" (Compare Phil. 4:19.)

### For Teachers of the Senior Scholars

Who was Ezra? Bring out that the word "scribe" has a large meaning in this connection, when applied to a man like Ezra, who was an inspired interpreter of God's Word, and a religious patriot, who longed in exile to do something to improve the trying condition of his countrymen in Palestine. What did he propose to do, and what was necessary to the success of his undertaking? Bring out that he readily obtained permission from the king to carry out his plans, and vast sums of money which he needed were provided. Encourage the class to picture the little band of exiles, numbering about 2,000, with Ezra at their head, assembled at the river of Ahava, near Babylon, ready to start on their long, perilous journey over the waste, howling wilderness to their own land, so dear to them as the homeland of their fathers, and the Holy Land of their God.

1. *A Fast Proclaimed*, vs. 21-23. Why did Ezra not ask the king, who was so favorably disposed toward the expedition, for a military escort? What help did he seek? Ezra determined to face the difficult way relying wholly upon the King of kings, rather than upon the king of Persia. How long did the religious services preparatory to the journey last? These services brought the happy conviction that God had heard their cry for help. Is it always wise to follow the example of Ezra in cases of this kind? Bring out that it is often wise for us to avail ourselves of all the earthly help within our reach, realizing that this is one of God's ways of ministering unto us. In times of sickness,

for example, it is fool-hardy for us to do nothing for ourselves. John Wesley tells that on one occasion he was cured by sulphur and supplication. But point out that there are times in life when we do not know what to do. All we can do then is to cast ourselves upon the mercy of our God.

2. *Treasurers Appointed*, vs. 24-30. Show that Ezra was a practical business man as well as an inspired teacher and zealous patriot. He made sure that the vast treasure of the expedition should be honestly accounted for. He knew well that slipshod methods of business lead to dishonesty. Emphasize the solemn way in which Ezra sought to impress upon those who were to guard the treasure, the importance of their task.

3. *A Prosperous Journey*, vs. 31, 32. How long did it take the returning exiles to reach Jerusalem? To whom is credit given for this prosperous journey? The robbers of the desert could do nothing to harm the returning exiles when God was with them. We need never fear what man can do while we are dwelling in the secret place of the Most High.

### For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

The principal interest in to-day's lesson for the boys and girls centres in vs. 22, 23, 31. The scholars will remember something of the dangers of the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem,—the wild animals, the wilder tribes, the ambushes, the attacks by day or night. Caravans guarded by soldiers or armed men often found it a dangerous passage. Yet Ezra and his 1,800 companions, with the silver and gold and precious vessels, made the three months' journey in safety. They depended only upon the protection of Jehovah. They had fasted and prayed; they put their faith to the test; and God delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. Modern missionary enterprises puts our faith to the test; and missionary biographies contain many instances of God's protection accorded to his servants. Any such story would serve as a fitting introduction to the lesson.

1. Develop a picture of Ezra's life in Babylon. He was of a priestly family; but his work was chiefly that of a scribe,—not a mere copyist, but a diligent student of the