

BIG IDEA:	God wants me to persevere to do His good work.
BIBLE BASIS:	Book of Ezra
KEY VERSE:	“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12 NIV

THE BIG BIBLE STORY

Preschool video: <https://youtu.be/pYRNzGAMM7k>

Elementary video: <https://youtu.be/QjNKOz4stFE>

Ezra was a priest and a prophet, through whom God spoke to his people. But above all, Ezra was a lover of God's book in a time when the book of the Lord was almost forgotten. Nearly all the books of what we call the Old Testament had been written for a long time; but in those days there were no printed books; each copy was written separately with a pen; and as the labor was great, there were very few copies of the different books of the Bible. These copies were in different places; one book of the Bible was in one place, another book was in another place. No one man in those times before Ezra had ever owned or had ever seen the whole of the Old Testament in one book or set of books.

Ezra began to seek everywhere among the Jews for copies of these different books. Whenever he found one he wrote it out, and kept the copy, and also led other men to copy the books as they found them. At last Ezra had copies written of all the books in the Old Testament except the very latest books. They were written very nearly as we have them now, except that his copies were all in Hebrew, the language spoken by the men who wrote most of the Old Testament.

Ezra put all these different books together, making one book out of many books. This great book was written on parchment, or sheepskin, in long rolls, as in old time all books were written. When the book was finished it was called "The Book of the Law," because it contained God's law for his people, as given through Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Isaiah, and all the other prophets.

When Ezra had finished writing this book of the law, he went on a long journey through Babylon to Judea, taking with him the rolls of the book. With Ezra went a company of men whom he had taught to love the law, to write copies of it, to read it, and to teach it to others. These men, who gave their lives to studying, and copying, and teaching the law, were called "scribes," a word which means "writers."

Ezra was the first and the greatest of these scribes; but from his time there were many scribes among the Jews, both in Judea and in all other lands. For wherever the Jews lived they began to read the Bible and to love it. The time came, soon after Ezra's day, when in every place where the Jews met to worship at least one copy of all the books in the Old Testament was kept; so that there was no more danger that the Bible, or any part of it, would be lost.

Ezra wrought another work almost as great as that of giving the Bible to the world. He taught the Jewish people, first in Israel, and then in other lands, that they were the people of God. He taught the Jews to be a people by themselves, keeping away from those who worshipped idols, even though they lived among them. Thus Ezra led the Jews to look upon themselves as a holy people, given up to the service of God; and he taught them to live apart from other nations, with their own customs and ways of living, and very exact in obeying the law of God in the books given by Moses, even in some things that would seem small and not important. They were to be trained age after age in the service and worship of God. It was God's will that the Jews should be separate from other peoples, and very strict in keeping their law, until the time should come for them to go out and preach the gospel to all the world.

The Jews even now in our time continue to keep many of the rules that were given to their fathers long ago by Ezra; so next to Moses, Ezra had greater power over the Jews than any other prophet or teacher.

BIG BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS

For Preschoolers:

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- For what reason do you think God wanted Ezra to put the old testament together?

For Elementary:

- What was your favorite part of this story?
- What do you think would have happened if Ezra hadn't have put the Old Testament together?
- How do you think Ezra showed perseverance in this story? Do you think he might have been scared to tell the Jewish people the way they should live?

BIG BIBLE STORY ACTIVITIES

Prayer: Write a prayer to God. Ask Him to help you show perseverance in your daily life.

Journal: What do you think God's is wanting you to work on? In other words, what are some ways God can use you to do good in the world? Write about it.

Bible: Read it for yourself: Ezra 7:25-28. Discuss it with your parents. Tell them why you think this story matters.

Art: God has a purpose for your life just like He did with Ezra's. Draw a picture of Ezra contrasting the Old Testament while thinking of the way God can use you to do big things for His glory..