

Lesson 4

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job

The following assignments include various learning activities, such as questions, lists, essays, charts, comparisons, contrasts, and surveys. To receive credit for this lesson, you must complete the number of assignments indicated below and submit them to your institute instructor or administrator. You may submit your work either electronically or on paper, handwritten or typed.

Each lesson should take approximately 60–90 minutes to complete, the same amount of time you would typically spend in a weekly institute class. Since reading the scripture block listed in the lesson heading is expected of all institute students prior to class, the estimated time for each assignment does not include the time you need to spend reading the scripture block.

Complete two of the three assignments:

1. Ezra 1–10; Nehemiah 1–13. The Jews Delivered from Babylonian Captivity

Cyrus, king of Persia, captured Babylon and announced that captive Jews in Babylon could return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple (see 2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1). There were three major returns to Jerusalem: one approximately 538 B.C. under the direction of Zerubbabel (Haggai and Zechariah’s ministry), a second approximately 458 B.C. under the direction of Ezra, and a third 444 B.C. under the direction of Nehemiah.

- Read Ezra 1 and list all that Cyrus did to help the Jews in Babylon return to Jerusalem. Read Isaiah 44:24, 26, 28; 45:1–3, 13; JST, Genesis 50:29, 33; 2 Nephi 3:6–7, 15, 17; 10:3 and write a summary of everything the Lord revealed through the prophet Isaiah nearly 200 years earlier. Who else has had his name revealed in scripture before his birth?
- Read the chapter headings for Ezra 2–9. Write at least three insights or impressions that come to as you read Ezra’s prayer as found in Ezra 9:4–15. Write a few sentences about the congregation’s reaction to Ezra’s prayer found in 10:1–5.
- Nehemiah, like Ezra, pleaded with the Lord concerning his brethren, the Jews. Read Nehemiah 1 and the institute student manual commentary “Where Do the Books of Ezra and

Nehemiah Fit in the Old Testament?” (p. 319). Then add two additional insights or impressions to those you wrote from studying Ezra’s prayer.

- Read in the student manual Enrichment J–3, “The First Return of the Jews” (pp. 312–13), and the commentary for Ezra 4:1–10, “Who Were the Samaritans Who Hindered the Work on the Temple?” (pp. 320–21). In addition read Ezra 4:1–5; Nehemiah 2:10–20; 4:1–20. For additional understanding, read “Samaritans” in the Bible Dictionary (p. 768). From your understanding, write a short paper describing the origins of the Samaritans and the animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews. Include in your paper any experience you may have witnessed with opposition to the building of modern temples.
- The book of Nehemiah contains the account of someone who did a great work to protect himself and his people from enemies. He faced opposition (in various forms and from various sources), but when enticed to leave his work he responded that he was doing a great work and would not “come down” and let the work cease (Nehemiah 6:3). Reflect on what “wall-building” efforts you are making in your life. Then answer the following questions:
 - What “walls” of protection has the Lord commanded we have in place to guard against temptation?
 - What are you trying to build for your future?
 - In what ways are you tempted to leave that good work and “come down” to less worthy pursuits?
 - How can Nehemiah’s example help you?

2. Esther 1–8. Selfless Courage Helped Save the Jewish People

- Write a page describing each of the three people listed below. Include in your writing ways each of them put their own interests and safety aside to courageously stand for truth or help others in need. Include the scripture references found in Esther 1–8 that support your comments. Conclude your paper with two

or three attributes these three possessed that you would like to incorporate or strengthen more in your life. Write a brief plan of how you will develop these attributes.

- Queen Vashti (Esther 1)
- Mordecai (Esther 3–4)
- Esther (Esther 2–4, chapter summaries 5–8)

3. Job. Enduring the Challenges of Life Ultimately Brings the Blessings of Heaven

- a. Job is a book about dealing with affliction. Study Job 1–2, 42 and the student manual commentary for Job 13:7–28, “Trust in God” (p. 29). Write a one-page paper supporting the principle that not all suffering comes as a punishment for sin and that enduring well results in the Lord’s blessings. Use the principles from John 9:1–3; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 to help answer questions like what blessings the Lord reserves for the righteous and when the His blessings come. Sometimes the Lord’s blessings don’t come

until the next life. What blessings does Doctrine and Covenants 59:23 suggest we can expect in this life and the next life?

- b. In a way Job teaches us more about how to endure suffering than he provides reasons for suffering. For each of the following references write a statement that describes how Job effectively endured his suffering. At the end of this assignment write a paragraph about how you could use the example of Job to more effectively endure your trials:

- Job 1:21–22
- Job 2:9–10
- Job 9:15–22
- Job 12:1–6
- Job 13:14–19
- Job 14:5–15
- Job 19:25–27
- Job 23:8–16
- Job 27:4–6
- Job 31:6
- Job 42:1–6