Ezra's Scroll

A Bible Memory Game for Bereans of Every Age

Named for Ezra, who set his heart to study, do, and teach God's Law (Ezra 7:10), and the Bereans (Acts 17:11).

Overview

Ezra's Scroll is a free Bible-trivia card game. The Host reads clues about a person or place from the Bible, one at a time, and players race to name it. Correct answers earn cards; two wrong guesses earn a sin card. The game is played in sets of 5 rounds, and the player (or team) with the most points at the end wins.

What You Need

- **Players:** 2 to 5. With more than 5 players, split into teams (see "Team Play").
- **A Host:** the player who reads the cards and judges answers. The standard rule is one Host for the whole game. The Host reads and judges, but does not guess. (Optional rule: pass the Host role on after each set; see "Sets and Identity Cards.")
- **Decks:** one or more of the clue decks below. A Chinese version of the decks is also available.
  - **B** — Books of the Bible
  - **ER** — Exodus to Ruth
  - **Genesis** — people and places from the book of Genesis
  - **SM** — Samuel to Malachi (often called Prophets and Kings)
  - **NT** — New Testament
  - **Identity** — identity cards (see "Sets and Identity Cards")
- **Sin cards:** printed sin cards are included. If you run out, use any other marker, such as coins, tokens, or slips of paper.
- Optional: a timer.

Setup

1. Choose one Host for the whole game and agree on how the game will end: after a set number of rounds or at a time limit (see "Scoring and Ending the Game").
2. Place the sin cards and identity cards within reach, and leave space for a discard pile.
3. Choose the deck for the first set. Usually the game simply rotates through the decks, or players take turns choosing.

Playing a Round

A game is played in **sets of 5 rounds**. Each round uses one card:

1. The Host draws a card and reads the clues on it aloud, one at a time.
2. At any time, any player may call out the name of the person or place on the card. If it gets too chaotic, the Host may ask players to raise their hands and call on them in the order they raised them.
3. Each player has **two guesses per card**. A player who has used both guesses cannot guess again on that card.
4. The first player to name it correctly — on their first or second guess — keeps the card, with no penalty.

5. A player whose two guesses are both wrong receives a **sin card**.
6. If no one names it after all the clues have been read, the card goes to the **discard pile**.

Sets and Identity Cards

After every 5 rounds, the set ends. Before the next set begins:

- Every player **must** discard their identity card and draw a new one (see "Identity cards" below).
- Optional rule: the Host role passes to the next player, so everyone gets a turn to read.
- A new deck is chosen for the next set (rotate through the decks, or take turns choosing).

This repeats at the end of every set until the game ends.

Sin Cards

A player receives a sin card each time both of their guesses on a card are wrong. Players keep their sin cards in front of them until the end of the game. Each sin card is worth −1 point.

Scoring and Ending the Game

- Each card won is worth **+1 point**. Each sin card is worth **−1 point**. The player who drew the Savior gets +1 point.
- There is no running score and no target score. Cards can be gained or lost during the game (for example, through the thief or sin cards), so points are counted only at the end: everyone counts their cards, subtracts their sin cards, and adds 1 if they drew the Savior.
- The game ends after the agreed number of rounds, **or** when the agreed time limit is reached. If time runs out mid-set, finish the current set first.
- The game can last as long as the players would like.
- The player or team with the most points wins.

Ties

If two or more players are tied at the end, draw 5 cards from the discard pile and let the tied players guess them as a tie-breaker. If they are still tied, the players decide together how to settle it.

Team Play

The game is usually played individually, but with more than 5 players, split them into teams. A team's score is the total of its members' cards minus their sin cards.

Players of similar age and level: no rule changes are needed. Simply apply the individual rules to each team.

Players of different ages or levels:

1. Play the first set as normal, but each player holds their own cards.
2. Starting with the second set, the players with the most cards come forward to answer for their team first, then the players with the second-most cards, and so on.
3. The Host may skip cards they think are too difficult for less experienced players.
4. Once all the clues on a card have been read, the Host may allow the other players on each team to answer.

Identity cards

- **You always have exactly one.** At the end of every set of 5 rounds, every player must discard their identity card and draw a new one. Drawing is required, with no exceptions.
- **Read it out loud.** Your identity card gives you a special role for the next set. The card text says what you can do or what happens to you.
- **Powers last one set.** When you discard the card, its power ends. The only exception: Pharisee rules stay in force until someone draws the Savior.
- **The Host is not a player.** The Host never draws identity cards, never gets sin cards and never scores points. One Host for the whole game is standard.
- **Scoring.** Count only at the end of the game: +1 for each card you won, −1 for each sin card, and +1 for the player who drew the Savior.
- **Printing note.** To save paper, the Apostle, Commoner, Patriarch, Savior, Judge and King are printed on the New Testament and Books of the Bible sheets. They are still identity cards: after cutting, put them in the Identity deck.

The identity cards

Commoner — No special power. Just play normally.

Prophet — Each round, once the Host has read the first clue, the Prophet may guess before anyone else. That early guess counts as one of the Prophet's two guesses.

King — If the King gets a sin card, the King takes 2 sin cards instead of 1, and every other player takes 1 sin card. (The Host never gets sin cards.)

Pharisee — The Pharisee makes up a silly rule. Anyone who breaks it gets a sin card. The rule must apply to everyone and can only be a nuisance; it can never stop anyone from playing. "Everyone must stand up to answer" is allowed; "you can't speak" or "one player may not answer" is not. Pharisee rules stay after the card is discarded and all end when the Savior is drawn.

Priest — Every round, each player may try to get rid of one sin card through the Priest. The player offers the Priest one of the cards they have won, and the Priest asks a question about it. Right: the player keeps the card. Wrong: the Priest keeps it. Either way the player discards one sin card.

Judge — When the Judge card is drawn, the Judge challenges one other player to a one-on-one round. The Commoners (players holding the Commoner card) vote on who the Judge faces; if there are no Commoners, the Judge chooses. Each Commoner has one vote, and the player with the most votes is the opponent; if the vote is tied, the Judge chooses among the tied players. The Host is never the opponent. The Judge picks the deck. The Host reads clues from one card of that deck, and only those two may answer. The first to guess right keeps the card and the other takes a sin card. If neither guesses it, both take a sin card.

Patriarch — When the Patriarch wins a card, they may say "Double or Nothing." The Host asks a question about that card. Right: the Patriarch also takes a card from the discard pile. Wrong: the Patriarch loses only the card just won.

Tyrant — The Tyrant can banish a player, who then cannot guess that round. If no one else names the card, the banished player gets one try at the end; if they are right, the Tyrant gets a sin card. In one set the Tyrant can banish each player at most once.

Thief — The Thief may only steal from a player who has as many cards as the Thief or more. The Thief chooses one of that player's cards and asks them a question about it. Wrong: the Thief takes the card. Right: the player keeps it. Using this power gives the Thief a sin card.

Serpent — The Serpent picks one of their won cards and reads 3 “facts”: 2 true and 1 made up. The other players guess the lie; anyone who can’t spot it gets a sin card. Simple version: the true facts come from the card. Advanced version: the Serpent may also use true facts they know about that person.

Apostle — Any player who wants to may swap their identity card (discard it and draw a new one). For each player who swaps, the Apostle gets one question about a card from the discard pile, and keeps that card if right.

Savior — When the Savior is drawn at the start of a set, every player discards all their sin cards and all Pharisee rules made so far end. A Pharisee drawn in the same set still makes a new rule. The player who drew the Savior gets +1 at the end.

Leper (new card) — The Leper gets only one guess per card, and a wrong guess earns a sin card. Each round the Leper may “touch” one other player, who becomes unclean for that round: they also get only one guess and get a sin card if wrong. The Leper may choose the same player every round.



The Intention Behind This Game

This game is intended to increase people’s interest in the Bible’s characters, narrative, and history. It is designed to reward and encourage knowledge of the Bible. It is not meant to replace reading the Bible or doing your own research, but to encourage it.

Despite my best efforts, some things on these cards will be wrong — partly because I am not an expert in these topics, and partly because so much of the information shared is the honest best guess of knowledgeable people. If something seems off or interesting to you, I encourage you to dive into what the Bible says and explore the historical sources for yourself.

How to Contact Me

Found a typo that needs fixing? Want to share your favorite Pharisee rule? Have an idea for better rules or new identity cards? Contact me!

- Join our Facebook group: **Kingdom Gamification**
- Or email me at **Dabaiknight117@gmail.com**

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