

Ezra Chapter 9

V: 1-2 As this latest installment of priests, Levites, and servants led by Ezra arrives they soon discover that those that have gone before them have begun to compromise, to sin.

- It's 57 years later, Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah have probably passed from the scene and now for lack of good leadership or proper instruction we see compromise.
- They had taken wives of the various pagan cultures around them - and the leaders were the worst offenders!

Turn to / lists all the same groups of people:

Deuteronomy 7:2-6 “²And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: ³Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. ⁴For they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. ⁵But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. ⁶For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God...”

Malachi 2 - describes how some of these men actually divorced their Jewish wives so they could marry their pagan wives! Why? Debauchery, vile, wicked practices.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage bed un-defiled. License? Adultery / practices of the Canaanites...

- It was a grievous sin and departure from God's Word then, just as it is today. The prohibition against this type of relationship is intended as a protection for the believer, protecting them against apostasy - which leads to spiritual death.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 “¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

- They had not separated or consecrated themselves but they were still offering the “burnt” offerings of consecration and all the other sacrifices, putting on the appearances, the pretense of spirituality but on the inside behaving hypocritically.

2 Timothy 3:5 “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

- While all of this certainly impacted their own personal holiness, and that of the nation, it would also potentially have a far more important consequence if not dealt with in a Biblical manner.

“2...*holy seed*...”

- God had made several references to the Messiah coming through the tribe of Judah, and the lineage of David - but if the lineage of David was polluted through intermarriage with the pagan peoples this would adversely affect the lineage of the Messiah to come - this could not and would not be allowed.

V: 3-4 When Ezra realized what was happening he was shocked, he was dismayed, just completely stunned.

- Tearing of their garment and pulling out their own hair was and is an Eastern expression of grief.
- Ezra tore both his garment and his mantle: Tearing his garment; his covering - he was no longer “covered” - like Adam and Eve before him he was now naked and ashamed, no dignity.
- Tearing his “mantle” - like the mantle of Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist - the mantle was a symbol of authority, like the patriarch’s staff - it was now broken - he had no standing, no authority, no wisdom - he himself was broken and naked before the Lord.
- How do we react to sin when we’re aware of it?

Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...”

- It has been said that you can tell a lot about a persons character by what makes them laugh, or what makes them weep. (fail...)
- May 12, 2015 Barna Survey factors considered re: 2016 elections. Political party affiliations, experience, appearance, issues, character. #1 consideration 71% said stance on key issues. Distant 2nd - 41% Character (integrity, honesty, morality...) If a liar tells you they are pro-life, what does that matter?

- As he sat there, others who feared God came and sat with him. There was still a faithful remnant that God seemingly always preserves for Himself.
- Too many then & today simply take God's Word for granted, or disregard it altogether. Too many Christians today are willing to read the Bible, study it, outline it, and even defend it; but they don't fear God and seek to obey what the Bible says.

Isaiah 66:2 "... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word."

- Until God's people show respect for God and His Word, the Spirit of God can't work in mighty power as I'm sure He longs to do.
- He, they sat that way in kind of a catatonic state until the evening sacrifice.
- I understand Ezra's reaction, he's thinking that this is what got us into captivity in the first place - disregarding the Word of God and after all they've been through he just can't believe it.
- I have to admit though that I relate more to Nehemiah's reaction to the same information than I do that of Ezra.

Nehemiah 13:23-25 ²³In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: ²⁴And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. ²⁵And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves."

- Bear in mind that Atexerxes had sent Ezra with the authority to enforce the law, to banish the offenders, confiscate their wealth, or order their execution.

V: 5-7 At the time of the evening sacrifice Ezra gets up and then fell to his knees with his hands in the air and cried out to God.

2 Chronicles 7:14 "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

- Ezra is on the right track, he is doing for the nation, leading the nation in what we need to do on a regular basis - which is to humble ourselves before God and confess our sins!

Prayer - Home fellowship testimony

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- This is all a very frank, heartfelt confession: Ezra says that he’s ashamed, and he is!

Jeremiah was one of the prophets to Judah prior to their captivity - he decried their sin and said of them:

Jeremiah 6:15 “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.”

- We see the same thing today in those that promote and advocate sin - no shame whatsoever.
- In the NT there is a word that is used 4 times: wanton - wantonness: describes the people who can do the most horrible defiling acts of sin without any shame, who rather flaunt their sin. This is something that we see very much in the homosexual movement - no shame, no blushing.
- Ezra is saying I’m not like that - I do blush, I am ashamed - this is all too much, it’s over our head, it’s more than we can handle.

David could certainly relate:

Psalm 38:4 “For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”

- Since the days of our fathers - our kings, our priests - we’ve been sinners from the beginning, this is not some un-usual moment in history, it is our history - it’s who we are!

Romans 3:10, 23 “¹⁰As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.” - “²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

- Notice that he’s not using the word “sin” which is to miss the mark, to fall short - he’s using the word “iniquity” and “trespass”, which is a deliberate willful transgression, knowingly, a rebellious type of sin.
- All of this is how we ended up in captivity, as it is this day.
- Ezra is definitely on the right track in terms of approaching God in humility:

Psalm 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

V: 8-9 Ezra declares that “we are unworthy of your blessings...”

- That is true for all of us!
- After all of this you’ve been gracious to give us a brief moment in time, a reprieve. With this remnant you’ve given us a “nail” (a place to hang our coat) this seemingly last little remnant of a hope.
- Even though we were slaves, yet our God has not forsaken us - He has extended His mercy toward us.
- He’s given us favor with the kings of Persia, speaking of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.
- Look at us, we’re rebuilding the Temple and Jerusalem!

Jacob cries out to God and declares:

Genesis 32:10 “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant...”

- Ezra points out 5 things, 5 images to describe what God’s grace has done for the people.
1. God left them a “**remnant**” - He didn’t wipe them all out. In His grace, God had preserved a remnant. Throughout Jewish history, even when the nation turned from God, He always preserved a remnant that remained faithful to Him.
Malachi 3:16-17 “¹⁶Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. ¹⁷And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”
 2. “**Nail**” - stability - The image here is that of a nail pounded into the sanctuary wall or a tent peg driven into the ground - depicting security and stability, a foothold for the Jews.
 - God not only brought them back to their land, He had given them favor with their king and the local officials.
 3. “**lighten our eyes...**” - God gave light to their eyes, taking them out of captivity in Babylon and returning them to their own land. Having their eyes lightened speaks of new life, new joy, the dawning of a new day.

Lamentations 3:22-23 “²²It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

4. “reviving” - “... to give us a little reviving in our bondage.” The presence of the remnant in the land was like a resurrection from the dead! Their departure from Babylon was like the resurrection of a corpse from the grave.
5. The 5th image is that of “^{9b}... a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem” - speaking of God’s protection. God worked in the hearts of 3 Persian kings: Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes.
 - These were proud, powerful rulers, but the Lord in His sovereignty used them to fulfill His purposes.

Psalm 61:3 “For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”

V: 10-11 O Lord what can we say - we’ve messed up! We’ve forsaken your commandments, we become like the inhabitants of the land, we are unclean!

Psalm 51:3-4 “³For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”

V: 12-13 Represents a parenthetical break in Ezra’s prayer to God as he now addresses the people and exhorts them to righteousness and obedience. To choose God! Obeying God is always a choice.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 “¹⁹I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: ²⁰That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the lord swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

- Their choice will either make them strong or make them weak - obedience strengthens our walk with the Lord, disobedience weakens it.

Galatians 5:16 “This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

V: 14-15 Rhetorical question.

- Ezra again continues to address God - declaring that God is righteous; crying out to Him for mercy. If God were to be angry, we would be consumed, there would be no escape. We have no defense, no justification. Nothing we can say.

Romans 3:19 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

- Ezra is not arguing, he's not defending himself or the nation, he's included himself in the whole thing, we don't see any empty promise to do better - he is humbling himself before God, throwing himself and the nation upon the mercy of God.
- This is a wise move because it's an appeal to the character of God.
- The declaration: God you are righteous - we can't stand before you, we're not righteous.
- Here we see brokenness and confession, Chapter 10 will bring us to repentance - acting upon that confession.