

Ezra 9 Commentary

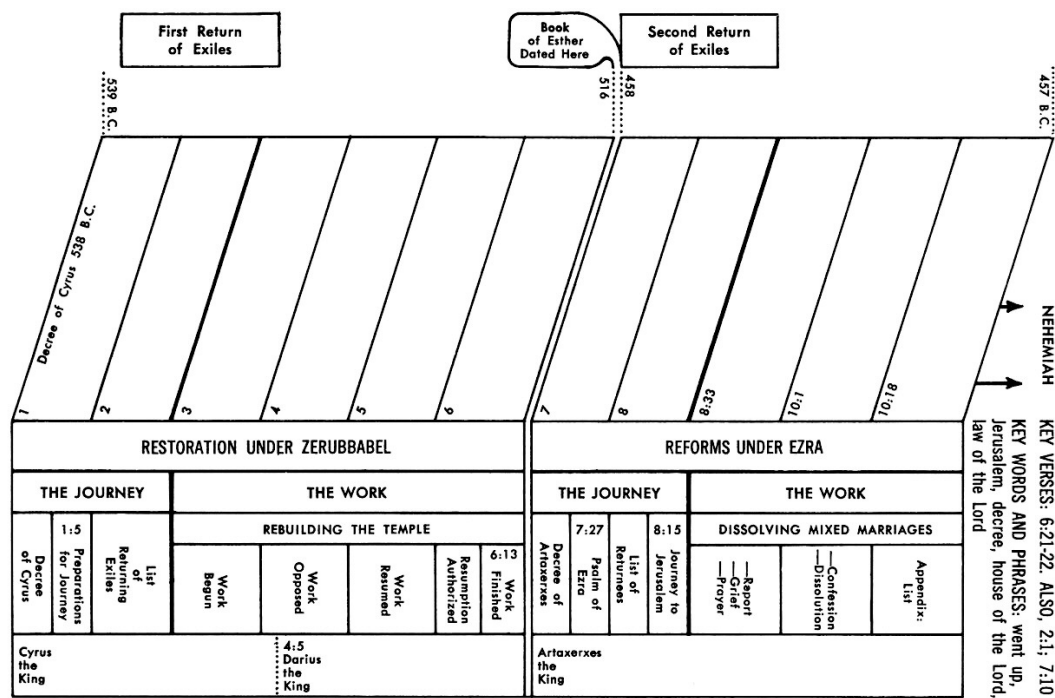
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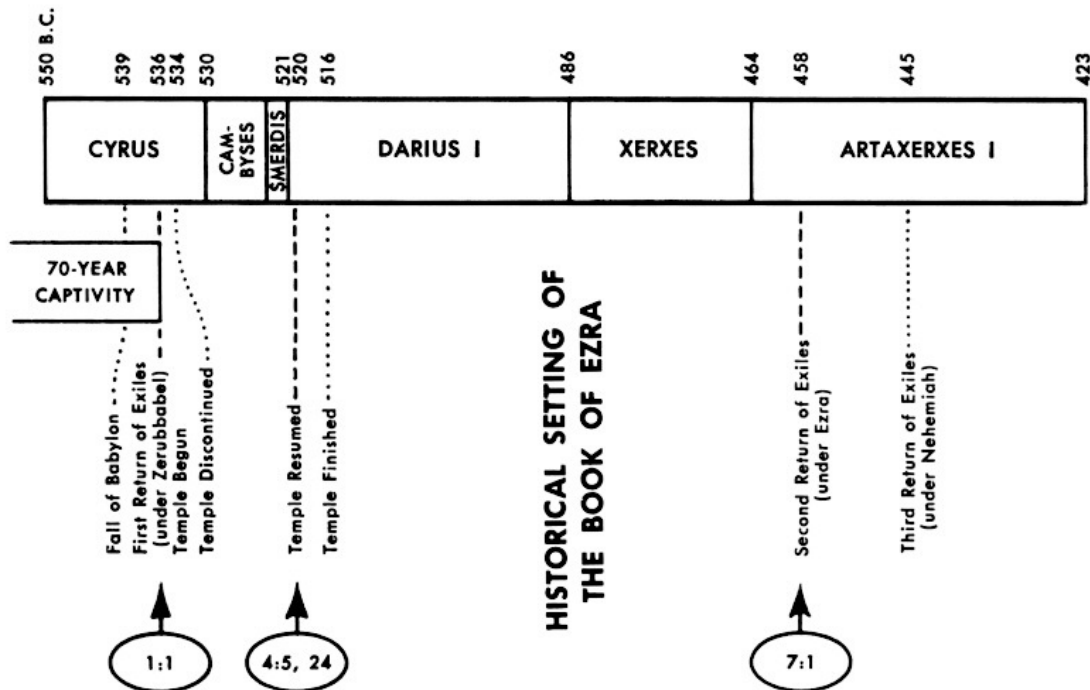
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THE PERSIAN KINGS		
King (dates)	Corresponding Chapters in Ezra	Relation to Other Books of OT
Cyrus 559-530	Chapters 1-6 (though there is no mention of Cambyses or Smerdis)	Haggai (520)
Cambyses 530-522		Zechariah (520-518)
Smerdis 522		
Darius 521-486		
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) 486-465	4:6	Esther (465)
Artaxerxes I 464-424	4:7-23 and chaps. 7-10	Malachi (450-400)
Darius II 423-404		Nehemiah (445-425)



Source: [ESV Maps](#)

EZRA UNDER CONSTRUCTION JUST A FEW NOTES NOW WILL FINISH IF THE LORD WILLS

Ezra 9:1 Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.

- the princes (KJV): Ezr 10:8⁺ Jer 26:10,16
- have not separated (KJV): Ezr 6:21,22⁺ Ezr 10:10,11⁺ Ex 33:16⁺ Nu 23:9⁺ Ne 9:2⁺ Ne 13:3⁺ Isa 52:11 2Co 6:14-18⁺
- doing according (KJV): Lev 18:3,24-30⁺ De 12:30,31⁺ De 18:9⁺ 2Ch 33:2⁺ Ps 106:35⁺ Ro 2:17-25⁺
- of the Canaanites (KJV): Ge 15:16,19-21⁺ Ex 23:23⁺ De 20:17,18⁺
- Ammonites (KJV): De 23:3-5⁺ 1Ki 11:1,5-7⁺ Ne 4:3,7⁺ Ne 13:1-3⁺
- Moabites (KJV): Nu 25:1-3⁺

Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.

Bob Utley - Now when these things had been completed" This could refer to Ezra 8:36⁺, which would explain the four and one-half month period between Ezra's arrival and these charges. Many scholars have assumed that Neh. 7:73-9:37 fits historically between Ezra 8⁺ and 9. However, they seem to be separated in time. Ezra 9:1-15⁺ is also recorded in I Esdras 8:68-90. ■ **princes** - The Hebrew term (BDB 978) has a wide range of meaning—"chieftain," "chief," "ruler," "official," "captain," "priest." Here it refers to religious leadership (cf. Ezra 8:24,29⁺; 2 Chr. 36:14⁺) or leaders of Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 8:14⁺; Neh. 4:16⁺; Neh 11:1⁺). Apparently Ezra's teaching of the Torah had an affect. This is a recurrent theme in both Ezra and Nehemiah. ■ **"The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites"** This three-fold division of the Jewish returnees is consistent throughout Ezra and Nehemiah. ■ **"had not separated themselves"** This VERB (BDB 95, KB 110) is a *Niphal* PERFECT (cf. Ezra 6:21⁺). Some of the returning Jews married the indigenous population. This was especially problematic because this was the very issue which the Jewish leadership used to reject

the help of the surrounding nations in Zerubbabel's day (cf. Ezra 4:1-5⁺). This issue is also dealt with by Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 13:23-29⁺, also note Mal. 2:10-16⁺). ■ **"the peoples of the lands"** The list is Mosaic (cf. Exod. 34:11-16⁺; Deut. 7:1-4⁺). These nationalities no longer had their identity (except Egypt, Ammon, Moab) in the post-exilic Persian period. However, it shows that Ezra was trying to relate to the Mosaic covenant. This chapter has nothing to do with the issue of interracial marriage, but of religious corruption. ■ **"abominations"** This term (BDB 1072) denotes a violation of YHWH's covenant requirements, especially as it related to the fertility practices of the tribes of Canaan (cf. Deut. 18:9; 1⁺ Kgs. 14:24; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:2; 2 Chr. 28:3⁺; 2 Chr 33:2⁺; 2 Chr 36:14⁺; Ezra 9:1,11,14⁺ and it is implied in Lev. 18:26,27,29,30⁺; Deut. 18:12⁺; Deut 20:18⁺). [See Abomination](#) ■ **"Canaanites"** This word (BDB 488) literally meant "to bundle" and came to refer to all the tribes of Palestine (Canaan). Some assert that the term meant "land of purple" (as does Phoenicia) and refers to the making of purple dye from sea shells. Even before this time period one of Ham's sons was named Canaan. He was cursed by Noah because of his father's sin (cf. Genesis 9⁺) and became an ancestor of the Canaanites and Phoenicians (this is why this term often means "trader" or "merchant"). This cursing and later, Moses' warnings to kill all of the Canaanites (e.g., Deut. 7:1-5⁺; Deut 20:17⁺; Ps. 106:34-39⁺), caused this word to become a metaphor of evil, corruption, and abhorrence. These native tribes of Canaan were fertility worshipers (i.e., "their abominations," cf. Ezra 9:1⁺; Gen. 15:16⁺). God knew they would compromise His people, therefore, many of the laws of Leviticus deal with separation from these groups. Now again, God's people had disobeyed and compromised their faith by marrying pagan women. [See Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine](#) ■ **"Hittites"** These were Kanesian-speaking descendants of a people who dominated central Turkey. Their kingdom was centered at Hattusas in Anatolia and was very involved in Mesopotamia and Palestine from 1800-1200 B.C. ■ **"Jebusites"** These were the inhabitants of Jerusalem until the conquest of David (cf. 2 Sam. 5:6-10⁺). Remember, Jerusalem was originally called Salem (cf. Gen. 14:18⁺) and later Jebus (e.g., Jos. 18:16,28⁺; Jdg. 19:10,11⁺). David made it his capital because of the proximity to Mt. Moriah, the place where YHWH caused His name to dwell (i.e., the temple mount). ■ **"the Ammonites and Moabites"** These were relatives of the Jews, the descendants of Lot, and his own daughters (cf. Genesis 19⁺). ■ **"Egyptians"** This racial group did not live in Palestine, but in northeast Africa. It must be remembered that Solomon, 1 Kgs. 3:1, and Joseph, Gen. 41:45, married Egyptians with no hint of condemnation involved. We must balance this chapter with Deut. 21:10-14⁺, which seems to allow foreign marriages. The problem was not foreign marriages, but religious amalgamation or eclecticism. ■ **"Amorites"** I Esdras 8:69 has "Edomites" (but not Ammonites or Amorites) instead of "Amorites." In Gen. 15:16⁺, it is a collective term for all of the peoples of Palestine (cf. Gen. 15:16⁺). Sometimes they are referred to collectively as Canaanites or Amorites, but often they are divided into ten groups (Gen. 15:19⁺), seven groups (Deut. 7:1⁺; Josh 3:10⁺; Josh 24:11⁺), six groups (Exod. 3:8⁺), five groups (Exod. 3:17⁺; Num. 13:29⁺), or three groups (Exod. 23:28⁺).

Believer's Study Bible - Abominations" included all things and practices abhorred by Yahweh: idols; anything offered to an idol; everything associated with idol worship, magic and divination; all sexual transgressions or deviations; and intermarriage with anyone who was not a worshiper of Yahweh. The abominations of the Canaanites precipitated the institution of prophecy, to warn Israel against these things (Deut. 18:9-14⁺). The prophets as an institution were to do henceforth for all the people what Moses and Joshua could do only for a limited number.

Walter F Adeney - "Feeble and isolated, the Jews were quite unable to resist the attacks of their jealous neighbours. Would it not be better to come to terms with them, and from enemies convert them into allies? Then the policy of exclusiveness involved commercial ruin; and men who knew how their brethren in Chaldea were enriching themselves by trade with the heathen were galled by a yoke which held them back from foreign intercourse." (See [The Expositor's Bible: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther](#))

Ryrie - 9:1-4 Ezra had been in Jerusalem about 4 1/2 months (8:31; 10:9) when the officials brought the problem of mixed marriages to his attention. See note on Deut. 7:3-4⁺. The sin had plagued Israel before (Judg. 3:5-6⁺) and would again later, in the time of Nehemiah and Malachi (Neh. 13:23-28⁺; Mal. 2:11⁺). Ezra inflicted signs of mourning and indignation on himself (cf. Lev. 10:6⁺; Isa. 50:6⁺; Neh. 13:25⁺), fully realizing the gravity of the situation. **Canaanites**, etc., were Semites but pagans; hence the prohibition against intermarriage was not on racial, but on religious, grounds.

Matthew Henry - **Ezra mourns for the Jews' conduct**- Ezra 9:1-4⁺. Many corruptions lurk out of the view of the most careful rulers. Some of the people disobeyed the express command of God, which forbade all marriages with the heathen, Deuteronomy 7⁺. Disbelief of God's all-sufficiency, is at the bottom of the sorry shifts we make to help ourselves. They exposed themselves and their children to the peril of idolatry, that had ruined their church and nation. Carnal professors may make light of such connexions, and try to explain away the exhortations to be separate; but those who are best acquainted with the word of God, will treat the subject in another manner. They must forebode the worst from such unions. The evils excused, and even pleaded for; by many professors, astonish and cause regret in the true believer. All who profess to be God's people, ought to strengthen those that appear and act against vice and profaneness.

Ezra 9:1⁺ The people have not separated themselves. - F B Meyer

This was only too true! There had been, on the part of princes and rulers, gross intermarriage with the people of surrounding lands.

The holy seed had become mixed and diluted. And it was the more sad that this should have taken place, when it was to cleanse His people from such alliances, and the evils to which they inevitably led, that God had passed them through the purging fires of the seventy years' captivity. It afflicted the good Ezra sorely. With every sign of Oriental grief he poured out his soul before God. And this is the lesson we should carry with us. It has been truly said that communion with the Lord dries many tears, but it starts many more. We no longer sorrow with the sorrow of the world; but we become burdened with some of the griefs that still rend the heart of the Lord in the glory.

This fellowship between the Lord's people and the world is becoming increasingly close as we near the end of the age. In the appointments of our homes, our amusements, books, and practices, there is very little to choose between the one and the other. If there is any distinction, it lies in a certain sadness with which Christians take their pleasures, as though remembering a something better. But the rest of us do not grieve over it; we do not rend our clothes: we do not take these things to heart, as though they especially concerned us.

Let us at least separate ourselves after the manner of Christ, who frequented the temple, acknowledged the State, accepted invitations to great houses; but His heart and speech always revolved about His Father. What if it led to our being cast out without the camp!

Ezra 9⁺

Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire. - Malachi 3:2⁺

TODAY IN THE WORD

In 1995, 150 years after its founding, the Southern Baptist Convention released a statement of confession, grief, and apology for its role in promoting slavery, segregation, and barriers to fellowship with African Americans. The resolution said, "We lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest," and asked "forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters." It committed "to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry."

When sin permeates the work and ministry of the people of God, deep repentance and confession is called for. Ezra demonstrated spiritual leadership by humbling himself to intercede on behalf of the people of Judah.

Except for the pause in building the temple (see Ezra 4⁺), the account of the return from Exile had been moving along beautifully—the people were obedient, God was faithful, the Persian kings had offered provisions, and the Jewish leaders had followed the Law. But now Ezra learned that an insidious sin had infected the people: they had intermarried with the surrounding peoples (vv. 1-2).

The core problem was not racial impurity (see Josh. 6:25⁺; Ruth 4). Rather, the problem was religious impurity (vv. 11-12). Intermarriage meant that the people began to blend worship of the true God with pagan practices, including child sacrifice (see 2 Kings 17:17⁺). The Lord had repeatedly warned His people to resist cultural pressure to adopt sinful values and had even sent them into exile; yet here they were again, falling back into the same patterns of sin (v. 7).

No wonder Ezra mourned. The heartbreak palpitates through every verse of his prayer. Ezra knew the history of his people and the character of God. The Lord had restored them to their land and to their worship—and again, they had sinned against Him. There can be no bargain, no negotiation, no excuses. Ezra simply wept at the sin of the people and acknowledged the righteousness of God (v. 15). His justice is like a refiner's fire; how could they stand in His presence (cf. Mal. 3:2⁺)?

APPLY THE WORD

Our culture promotes meaningless apologies: "I'm sorry if you took that the wrong way"; "I apologize if anyone was hurt"; "Mistakes were made." The reality of our sinfulness and God's holiness doesn't allow wiggle room for insincere confessions like, "God, I'm sorry if I sinned in some way." When confronted with the reality of sinful actions and attitudes, our only response should be like Ezra, to throw ourselves before the Lord in repentance and confession, knowing that He is gracious (v. 8).

Ezra 9:1-15⁺; Daniel 9:3-13⁺

I urge, then ... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for ... kings and all those in authority. - 1 Timothy 2:1–2⁺

TODAY IN THE WORD

O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations on the earth. To the President and members of the Cabinet, to Governors of States, Mayors of Cities, and to all in administrative authority, grant wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties.—The Book of Common Prayer

It's not always easy to know how to pray for "all those in authority." Sometimes we can get so frustrated with political issues and leaders that we don't feel like praying at all! The prayers of the priest Ezra and the prophet Daniel, both of whom insightfully prayed for their nation, are instructive.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When we consider praying for our own country, many of us might not begin with confession of sin. Yet humbly coming before the Lord, acknowledging the ways we have failed in our witness to our society, is a good place to start and keeps us from judging others in their sin. As Ezra and Daniel did, we can use God's character as the basis of our prayers. For example, we can pray that our elected officials uphold God's justice and that they rule with integrity and honor

Ezra 9:1-15⁺

"Come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." - 2 Corinthians 6:17⁺

TODAY IN THE WORD

Someone has said that God's people tend to have short spiritual memories. Most of us can verify the truth of that statement. We're usually pretty good at following God in tough times because, after all, where else can we turn for strength and help? But when times get better, or God gets us out of a tight spot, it's easy to forget His deliverance. Worse yet, sometimes we wind up back where we started, doing the things that got us into trouble in the first place.

It seems almost inconceivable that the Israelites of Ezra's day could have fallen into the sin of intermarrying with the idolatrous peoples around them. This was the one sin that, as much as any other, led to Israel's spiritual downfall and captivity. God had strictly forbidden intermarriage with other nations, because He knew that His people's hearts would be led astray by these unholy unions. This was not an issue of racial purity, but spiritual purity. Israel's long spiritual decline can be traced back as far as Solomon, who married many foreign women who worshiped detestable idols. Solomon's wives turned his heart from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-8⁺), and the worship of idols was established in Israel.

We said at the beginning of our study that Israel's seventy-year captivity in Babylon finally cured God's people of their infatuation with idol worship. But here were some of the former exiles, including the leaders, disobeying God and inviting His judgment again by taking foreign women as wives for themselves and their sons. No wonder Ezra tore his clothes and even pulled out some of his hair, a sign of extreme anguish. He knew what was at stake in this mess, and he was very zealous for God's honor.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If spiritual amnesia comes so easy to us, maybe we need to practice our "remembering." Here's a brief prayer checklist list you can use each day to keep your memory of God's grace and His holiness sharp. 1) Give thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:18⁺). 2) Ask God to search your heart and show you any "offensive way" (Ps. 139:23-24). 3) Don't be anxious about anything, but bring your requests to God (Phil. 4:6⁺). 4) Ask God to cleanse you from "hidden faults" and keep you from "willful sins" (Ps. 19:12-13⁺)

Steven Cole - The Godly Reaction to Sin (Ezra 9:1-15⁺)

Only twice in over 25 years of ministry have I seen a man weep genuine tears of repentance over his sin. One situation was a retired man in my church in California who worked part time as a janitor. He confessed to me how he had impulsively stolen a small item from a desk in the office he cleaned. Then he broke into tears over the sinfulness of his own heart.

I fear that in our decadent society, even we in the church have grown so used to sin that it doesn't shock us anymore. C. H. Spurgeon (*Autobiography of C. H. Spurgeon* [Banner of Truth], 1:160) warned his fellow pastors of the danger of dealing with sin and sinners professionally, so that we lose our dread of evil. What at first shocked us becomes commonplace and routine. As Alexander Pope perceptively observed (*Essay on Man*, line 217, in *Familiar Quotations*, John Bartlett [Little, Brown, & Co.], 13th ed., p. 317):

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Because we are so desensitized toward sin, we fail to have the proper response toward it, whether it is our own sin, or sin in others. We minimize it, justify it, or ignore it and go on our way unaffected by it.

If we see someone reacting in a godly way toward sin, we think that he is a bit carried away or extreme. He is judgmental or intolerant. How dare he cast stones at others! Does he think that he is without sin? And so, by casting our stones at him, we justify our sins and go back to business as usual, wondering why God doesn't bless our lives more than He does.

Our text relates Ezra's reaction to the sin of the exiles who had returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity. About four and a half months (Ezra 7:9+, cf. Ezra 10:9+) after he led a remnant back to the land, it was reported to him that many people in Israel, including many priests, Levites, princes, and rulers, had sinned by taking pagan wives.

Ezra did not take the news in stride, chuckling, "Well, people will be people." Rather, he tore his clothes, pulled some hair from his head and beard, and sat down appalled and speechless until the time of the evening offering. By then a number of godly people had gathered around him. Ezra arose, then fell to his knees, lifted his hands to the Lord, and confessed the great sin of his people, identifying himself with them, although he had not sinned in this regard. His prayer, which ranks with Nehemiah 9+ and Daniel 9 as one of the great prayers of confession in the Bible, shows us the godly reaction to sin:

The godly reaction to sin is to recognize it from Scripture, to mourn over it, and to confess it without excuse to the God of mercy.

How a person reacts to the news of sin tells a lot about that person. If we hear about adultery and get a subtle thrill reading the juicy details, it reveals that we do not hate that sin and are vulnerable to it ourselves. While I confess that I have never reacted as strongly against sin as Ezra did (I can't afford to pull out my hair!), and while part of his reaction may be culturally explained, we still can learn from him that we need to abhor sin so that we do not become desensitized to it. The first step is:

1. The godly reaction to sin is to recognize it from Scripture.

How do we know what is right and wrong? A popular song (supposedly Christian) a few years ago asked, "How can it be wrong when it feels so right?" I hope that most Christians know that feelings are not a solid basis for determining right and wrong. Yet I've had young ladies, purporting to be Christians, tell me that they are going to marry a non-Christian man because they have prayed about it and feel a peace about it. Never mind that the Bible strongly forbids entering such a marriage! It's how you *feel* about it! I've had Christian spouses tell me that they feel a peace about divorcing their mates for unbiblical reasons. The peace they feel is the relief of escaping from a difficult relationship, not the peace of God. But they often act on feelings, rather than on God's Word.

Some say that we should follow our consciences, but the conscience is only reliable to the degree that it has been formed by Scripture. For example, I ask couples who want me to marry them to fill out a questionnaire. One question asks about the couple's level of physical involvement, and the next question asks how they feel about their level of involvement, with the choices: Good, Concerned, Guilty, or Trapped. Sometimes I get couples who report that they have sex often and they feel good about it! That tells me that this couple doesn't have a clue about what God's Word says about sexual purity before marriage. Their sense of right and wrong has been formed more by the culture than by Scripture.

A. SCRIPTURE REVEALS TO US WHAT SIN IS.

Ezra was appalled when he heard about these Jews marrying pagans because he knew that God's Word condemns it. He laments (9:10), "For we have forsaken Your commandments," and he goes on to cite God's prohibition against intermarriage with the pagans of the land. His citations are not an exact quote, but rather a summary of passages such as Exodus 34:11-16+ and Deuteronomy 7:1-4+. The reporting of this sin to Ezra (9:1) reflects the biblical language, in that these are the people groups that inhabited the land before the conquest under Joshua. Only the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians were still extant. But the point is, Ezra and the leaders who reported this sin to him knew that it was sin because God's Word declared it to be sin.

When the princes reported that the holy seed had been intermingled with the peoples of the land (Ezra 9:2+), their concern was not racial corruption, but rather, moral corruption. In the original command, God explained the reason for the prohibition: "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods" (Deut. 7:4+; see Exod. 34:16+). God knew the tendency of fallen hearts. Rather than influencing their mates to abandon their idols and follow the one true God, the Israelites would be prone to mingle pagan idolatry with their worship of God.

This is called syncretism, and it always has been a major problem for God's people. We don't blatantly deny Christianity. Rather, we add to our faith the beliefs and practices of the world, so that in a short time, we are virtually indistinguishable from the world in our thinking and in the way we live. Because of this propensity, God forbade intermarriage and He even prohibited the Jews from seeking the peace and prosperity of the pagans in their pagan ways (Deut. 23:6+; contrast Jer. 29:7+). There had to be a clear separation of God's people from the pagans or God's people would be drawn into the pagan practices.

Blending in with the world rather than being distinct from it has plagued the church down through the centuries. Monasticism was an attempt to escape worldly influence by withdrawing from the world. I was surprised a few years ago to read some leading

evangelicals who were suggesting a revival of monasticism as a way to stem the current flood of worldliness in the church! The problem with monasticism is that Jesus wants His followers to be *in* the world as salt and light, but not to be *of* the world (Matt. 5:13-16+; John 17:14-18+). He calls us to go into the world with a distinct mission, to reach the world with the gospel. But to do that effectively, we must remain unstained from the world. The way we think and the way we live must be shaped by Scripture, not by the world.

James 4:4+ bluntly says, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” 1 John 2:15+ is no less strong: “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Or, as Paul puts it with regard to seeking worldly riches: “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim. 6:9-10+).

Since we have so many college age people in our church, and since our text specifically warns about intermarriage with pagans, I want to underscore that application. I have seen many Christian young people fall in love with unbelievers and consequently either fall away from their faith or have their zeal for the Lord greatly diluted. If you know and love Jesus Christ, the most important thing to look for in a mate is a person who loves Christ and is devoted to following Him. A believer and an unbeliever have totally different values and goals. An unbeliever is living for pleasure and the things of this world. A believer lives to seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness. To join the two is a built-in formula for conflict and misery in the home. Your children also will suffer.

Be on your guard! Satan uses the tool of an unbelieving or worldly mate to ensnare many Christian young people. “Do not be bound together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14+)

B. SCRIPTURE REVEALS TO US WHAT SIN DOES TO PEOPLE.

Satan always sugarcoats sin to make it look appealing. We mistakenly think that sin will get us what we want, but it always leads to bondage and ruin. Ezra’s prayer reveals where the nation’s sins had led them (Ezra 9:7+): “... on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder and to open shame” Four times he refers to the people as an escaped remnant (Ezra 9:8, 13, 14, 15+), showing how the formerly strong nation had been decimated. He repeatedly uses words like “slaves,” “bondage,” and “ruins” (Ezra 9:8-9+) to describe the condition of the people. He acknowledges that if they do not repent, God may destroy them so that no remnant survives or escapes (Ezra 9:14+).

God’s Word plainly warns that sin not only enslaves and eventually destroys the sinner; it also takes a toll on others. Marvin Breneman (See [Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: An Exegetical and Theological Commentary](#)) writes, “Christians who adopt a life-style that negates Jesus’ commands are sacrificing both the future of the church and that of the peoples it should be reaching with the gospel.” If we blend into the world, lost peoples will not hear the gospel through our witness and our support of missionaries. Our children will grow up thinking that Christianity has nothing to do with how we live, and they will reject the faith altogether.

Thus we must steep ourselves in God’s Word so that we instantly recognize sin in ourselves and can turn from it. And being in the Bible more than we are in TV and other worldly media will keep us aware of the devastating toll of sin.

2. The godly reaction to sin is to mourn over it.

When Ezra heard of this sin of God’s people, he tore his garment and robe, pulled some hair from his head and beard, and sat down appalled for hours. His reaction probably seems extreme to us, and in part it may be culturally determined. But, as Edwin Yamauchi observes, “Rare is the soul who is so shocked at disobedience that he is appalled (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Zondervan], 4:664). R. W. Dale said, “It is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath, that we do not believe that sin provokes the wrath of God” (cited by R. C. Sproul, *The Cross of Christ Study Guide*, p. 35).

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4+). In his sermon on that text, Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, “I cannot help feeling that the final explanation of the state of the Church today is a defective sense of sin and a defective doctrine of sin” (see [Sermon on the Mount](#)). He goes on to say that the reason so many professing Christians lack joy is that they have never experienced a real, deep conviction of sin, which is the essence of the gospel. He says (*ibid.*, pp. 55-56),

They have failed to see that they must be convicted of sin before they can ever experience joy. They do not like the doctrine of sin. They dislike it intensely and they object to its being preached. They want joy apart from the conviction of sin. But that is impossible; it can never be obtained. ... Conviction is an essential preliminary to true conversion.

C. H. Spurgeon saw the same thing in his day. (In the following quote, he mentions “revivalism,” which refers to those who used the

new methods of Charles Finney, calling people to a “decision” for Christ by going forward. It was a man-centered approach to evangelism that denied the necessity of God’s sovereign power in the conversion of sinners. BORROW [Revival & Revivalism, by Iain Murray](#) [Banner of Truth] for an excellent treatment of this.) Spurgeon wrote (source unknown),

A very great portion of modern revivalism has been more a curse than a blessing, because it has led thousands to a kind of peace before they have known their misery; restoring the prodigal to the Father’s house, and never making him say, “Father, I have sinned.” How can he be healed who is not sick, or he be satisfied with the bread of life who is not hungry? The old-fashioned sense of sin is despised.... The consequence is that men leap into religion, and then leap out again. Unhumbled they came to the church, unhumbled they remained in it, and unhumbled they go from it.

In his great work, [A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections](#) (BORROW), Jonathan Edwards rightly argued, “True religion [he meant genuine Christianity], in great part, consists in holy affections” [= emotions] ([Banner of Truth], 1:236). When God changes our hearts through the new birth, He gives us new desires for holiness and a hatred toward sin. These emotional qualities (and many others) will increase over time. But a distinguishing mark of a true Christian is that he mourns over sin, both his own sins and the sins of others.

Ezra was so steeped in God’s Word and the history of God’s ways with His errant people that he knew that God’s severe discipline would fall again if the people did not repent. Even though Ezra himself had not committed this particular sin, he identified himself with the sin of the people and mourned over it.

What would you think of a doctor, who upon discovering that you had cancer, gave you a hug and said, “Take two aspirin and you’ll be just fine”? How about a fireman who responded to a report of a house on fire by saying, “It will burn itself out soon”? How about a policeman who arrived at the scene of a robbery, shook his head and said, “Boys will be boys”? In each case, the response is inappropriate to the situation.

A Christian’s response to sin, whether his own or the sin of other believers, should be to mourn. That attitude stems from trembling at the words of God (Ezra 9:4⁺). The godly reaction to sin is first to recognize it from Scripture, and then to mourn over it.

3. The godly reaction to sin is to confess it without excuse to the God of mercy.

Ezra’s prayer is a model of confession. It has four elements:

A. CONFESSION ACKNOWLEDGES THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN ALL HIS DEALINGS WITH US.

Ezra affirms God’s righteousness in His past punishment of Israel by sending them into captivity: “O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous” (Ezra 9:15⁺). In Ezra 9:13⁺ he acknowledges that God has given them less than their sins deserve. The implication of Ezra 9:14⁺ is that if God were to give them what they deserved now, He would totally wipe them out. Ezra exonerates God, while accepting the blame for what the people have done.

B. CONFESSION SUBMITS TO GOD’S RIGHTEOUS DEALINGS WITHOUT COMPLAINT OR EXCUSE.

There is not even a hint of complaint on Ezra’s part that God has not been fair. He does not point to any extenuating circumstances. Perhaps there was not an adequate supply of Jewish women for these exiles to marry, which led them to marry foreign wives. Perhaps the men rationalized by saying, “But our wives promised to worship at the temple with us.” But Ezra laid aside any and all excuses. Rather than complaining about God’s judgment, Ezra readily acknowledged that God would be justified to inflict much more punishment than He had.

Ezra’s identification with the people, in spite of his own innocence in this sin, shows that he knew the evil that lurked in his own heart. If he had been self-righteous, he would have prayed, “Lord, these people of Yours are obstinate and wicked. You are righteous to judge them. But I’m not like they are.” But instead, he included himself when he confessed the sins of the people.

Many years ago, a correspondent of the London Times was reporting on many of the same problems that we now have. He ended every article with the question, “What’s wrong with the world?”

G. K. Chesterton wrote a brief reply: “Dear Editor, What’s wrong with the world? I am. Faithfully yours, G. K. Chesterton.” Biblical confession doesn’t excuse oneself.

C. CONFESSION AGREES WITH GOD CONCERNING HIS VIEW OF OUR SIN.

We are prone to minimize our sin by calling it a shortcoming, a fault, a tendency, or other benign terms. Ezra admits his shame because “our iniquities have risen over our heads” (Ezra 9:6⁺). In other words, “We’re drowning in a flood of our sins.” He refers to their “great guilt” because of their iniquities that led to the captivity (Ezra 9:7⁺). He admits to forsaking God’s commandments by joining with the uncleanness, abominations, and impurity of the peoples of the land (Ezra 9:10-11⁺). He refers again to their “evil deeds” and “great guilt” (Ezra 9:13⁺) for breaking God’s commandments and committing these abominations (Ezra 9:14⁺). He does not gloss over their sins as no big deal. He calls it what it is.

D. CONFESSION CASTS THE SINNER ON GOD’S UNDESERVED MERCY, BASED ON THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ezra’s prayer makes no petition, but rather, he implicitly casts himself and the nation on God’s undeserved mercy. He acknowledges that the current return from exile and the building of the temple are a gracious “little reviving” from God (Ezra 9:8-9⁺), which those who have sinned have ungratefully disregarded.

Ezra made his prayer at the time of the evening offering (9:5). Perhaps the smell of the sacrifice encouraged his heart that God has made a way for sinners to be reconciled to Him, namely, through the shedding of the blood of a substitute. The Old Testament sacrifices pointed ahead to the shed blood of God’s perfect and final sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ’s blood applied to our hearts, we can draw near to God for cleansing from all our sins.

Conclusion

J. C. Ryle said, “Christ is never fully valued, until sin is clearly seen” (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* [Baker], on Luke 20:9-19⁺, p. 326). Thus our first reaction to sin must be to see it clearly from the Scriptures. Then, realizing that it put our Savior on the cross, we should mourn over it. Finally, we should confess it without excuse to the God of mercy, appropriating His cleansing for our consciences, that we might be renewed to serve Him in purity.

C. S. Lewis observed, “When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less” (cited by Nathan Hatch, *Christianity Today* [3/2/79], p. 14). As we grow in godliness, with Ezra we will react more strongly to our own sins and to the sins of God’s people. We will dwell more consistently at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ, where God’s mercy flows to repentant sinners.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it essential that we go to the Bible as our only authoritative source of right and wrong?
2. Why do we need to keep before us the Bible’s picture of the devastating effects of sin?
3. Some argue that confession does not involve feelings, but only faith. Why is this unbiblical? What should we do if we lack the proper emotional reaction to sin?
4. To what degree should we mourn over the sins of others? Are we supposed to go around depressed all the time?

Brian Bell - Nehemiah 9:1-15⁺

1. **Intro: Ezra’s 10 Step Program** in confronting sin
 1. Recap: The 2nd group made it back to Jerusalem, from captivity in Babylon. Ezra 8:31,32⁺
 2. We are going to look at the steps in **confronting sin** (Ezra 9⁺) & its **results** (Ezra 10⁺).
 3. What do you do if you know of a Christian friend who is living in sin? How do you help them? How do I get out of a sin myself? *Ezra will lead us through **steps** that will help us.*
 4. This evening we are going to talk about racial/mixed marriages.
 1. Before we do...let’s review a few reminders. God was “only” concerned with **the Jews** intermarrying...& that...only for **a time**. (pre-Messiah)
2. **A MESS MADE OF MIXED MARRIAGES (Ezra 9:1-4⁺)**
 1. (Ezra 9:1a⁺) Their Sin Uncovered
 1. Ezra’s **Leaders** took oversight of the flock
 1. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
 2. (Ezra 9:1b,2a⁺) Their Sin?

1. Lack of Separation
2. What was the deal of the *holy seed getting mixed*?
 1. How could Messiah be born? (nationality/Jew, tribe/Judah, ancestry/son of David)
 1. Lev.19:19+ You shall not sow your field with mixed seed.
3. Unequally yoked – they had taken pagan wives.
 1. (NLT) Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16 And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.
3. (Ezra 9:2b+) Their Sins depth
 1. The leaders & rulers had even compromised in this sin.
 2. **Leaders**...that's for sure...but leading in the *wrong direction*.
 1. These guys **led** the way, they **paved** the path of sin. *Discipleship at its finest!*
4. *Ezra's response is a good model for us to follow when confronting sin:*
 1. **Ezra's 10 Step Program**...in confronting sin.
5. **Step #1 – He Grieved** (Ezra 9:3a+)
 1. He let it affect him personally.
 2. “**The beard** is held in high respect and greatly valued in the East: The possessor considers it as his greatest ornament; often swears by it; and, in matters of great importance, pledges it; and nothing can be more secure than such a pledge; for its owner will redeem it at the hazard of his life. The beard was never cut off but in **mourning**, or as a sign of **slavery**.” (*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. Notes on 2 Sam. 10:4+.*)
 1. 2 Sam.10:4+ Therefore Hanun (king of Ammon) took David's servants, **shaved off half of their beards**, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks (mini-skirts), and sent them away.
 2. Is.50:6,7+ I gave My back to those who struck Me, **And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard**; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.
6. **Step #2 – He Sat** (Ezra 9:3-4+)
 1. He sat, waited, & meditated before responding
 2. I believe he was seeking the lord on what to do
 3. We'll see he doesn't strike out against them in anger, but instead **sits**...*until completely broken*.
 4. Note the people respond to this intense grief of soul
 1. What do you think would be the outcome if he **yelled & screamed** at them?
 2. Is this the secret of winning **our children**, or **our backslidden friends**, from the sin that's entrapped them?
 5. Application: *Sit in silence. Hard, but just sit. Sit, wait, meditate.*
3. **EZRA'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Ezra 9:9+5-15)**
 1. **Step #3 – He Fasted** (Ezra 9:5a+)
 1. ½ day fast.
 2. **Step #4 – He Prayed** (Ezra 9:5b+)
 1. He **physically** humbled himself before God (on knees/spread out hands).
 2. Before the people Ezra 9:4+
 3. Application: *humble yourself before God. Change body position.*
 3. **Step #5 – He Confessed** (Ezra 9:6-15+)
 1. He confessed...His **Shame & Humility** (6a)
 1. Mark Twain once said, *Man is the only animal that blushes, and the only animal that needs to*. Does **anything** make us blush anymore?
 2. He confessed...**He's personally not excluded** from their sin (Ezra 9:6b+)
 1. Rather than strike out angrily at those who had sinned, Ezra identified **himself** with the sinners.
 2. Have you ever fit into the category of the sin you are so disgusted with?
 3. *Better yet*, do you **expand** the category until you fit in it? That promotes humility.
 3. He confessed...The **Depth** of their sin (Ezra 9:6c+) [2 pictures]
 1. They were swimming in a sea of **sin**...& **drowning**.
 2. Their **guilt** was as high as *Jack's Bean stock*.
 1. Rev.18:5+ *re: Babylon*. For her **sins** have **reached to heaven**, and God has remembered her iniquities.
 4. He confessed...The **Reason** for their former captivity (Ezra 9:7+)
 5. He confessed...The **Grace** shown to them in being freed (Ezra 9:8+)
 1. They didn't appreciate the Grace that was shown them.

2. **Peg** – figurative. It inferred *to hang any kind of domestic utensils upon it*.
 1. Is 22:23 I will fasten him (*Eliakim*) as a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.
 2. What area of your life are you a secure peg for others?
 1. Friends can trust you won't **gossip** about their situation.
 2. Friends can trust you'll be **straight/honest/forthright** w/ them.
 3. Friends can trust you will **genuinely care** about their situation.
 4. (fill in the blank) Friends lean on me because _____.
6. He confessed... **Gods Mercy** that was shown (Ezra 9:9+)
 1. Revive (us) – Repair (temple) – Rebuild (ruins/wall)
7. He confessed... **Their Sin identified**... intermarriage w/ pagans (Ezra 9:10-12+)
 1. Never settle for the temporary peace or prosperity the world has to offer
8. He confessed... **Gods Mercy** that was shown (Ezra 9:13+)
 1. Anybody disagree with this statement? Its for **2 reasons**:
 1. You do not the understand **the Holiness of God**
 2. You do not understand **the seriousness of sin**
 2. Do you view sin from **God's** standpoint? What was **His cost**? What was **yours**?
9. He confessed... understanding of **deserved captivity** again (Ezra 9:14+)
 1. This time with no escape
10. He confessed... **Gods Righteousness** (Ezra 9:15+)
 1. "No man can really know the righteousness of God, & in its light see sin, & remain quiet & calculating & unmoved." (*G. Cambell Morgan; pg. 189*)
 2. Yet now we **can** stand before Him.. How?
 3. **Ro 14:4+** Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be **made to stand**, for **God is able to make him stand**.
11. Application: *confess your sin. Think about His rt & the seriousness of your sin.*

Ezra 9:2 "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness."

- taken of their (KJV): Ezr 10:18-44+ Ex 34:16+ De 7:1-4+ Ne 13:23,24+ Mal 2:11+
- the holy seed (KJV): Ex 19:6+ Ex 22:31+ De 7:6+ De 14:2+ Isa 6:13+ Mal 2:15+ 1Co 7:14+
- mingled (KJV): Ge 6:2+ Ne 13:3,23,24+ 2Co 6:14+
- the hand (KJV): Ezr 10:18-44+ Ne 13:4,17,28+

For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness

Walter F Adeney - "Leading aristocratic families were foremost in contracting the foreign alliances. It is such as they who would profit most, as it is such as they who would be most tempted to consider worldly motives and to forgo the austerity of their fathers. (See [The Expositor's Bible: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther](#))

Bob Utley - "**for they have taken some of their daughters**" It must be remembered that Moses (Exod. 2:21+; Num. 12:1+, and David, 2 Sam. 3:3+) had foreign wives, as well as Joseph (Gen. 41:50) and Solomon (1 Kgs. 7:8). The holy race is not primarily racial, but religious (cf. Jdg. 3:4-7+). The problem was not blood, but faith in YHWH (monotheism). ■ "**and for their sons**" Arranged marriages were the only cultural option. These returning Jews were putting their male children in danger by divorcing their wives in order to marry Canaanite women within established families. ■ "**the holy race**" This is an idiom (i.e., "the seed of holiness," JPSOA, "the holy seed") for a people who were meant to reflect God's character (e.g., Exod. 19:6+; Isa. 6:13+). There is no special race because all humans are made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27+). However, in this context it refers to the covenant people group out of which will come the Messiah (i.e., Jews, e.g., Gen. 12:3+; Gen 28:14). ■ **intermingled** - The Hebrew VERB (BDB 786 II, KB 876, *Hithpael* PERFECT) meant to take or give a pledge, which was an idiom of identifying with someone (cf. Ps. 106:35+; Prov. 20:19; Prov 24:21). ■ "**the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness**" The leaders of the returning Jews were the very ones who were acting in such disobedient ways! The term "**unfaithfulness**" (BDB 591) means "a treacherous act" or "a breach of interpersonal trust," usually with God (e.g., Ezra 9:2,4+; Ezra

10:6⁺; Lev. 5:15⁺; Num. 5:12⁺; Jos. 22:22⁺; 1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 29:19⁺; 2 Chr 33:19⁺). Biblical faith involves (1) personal commitment, (2) covenantal commitment, and (3) faithfulness.

EZRA 9:1-10:1

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked (Psalm 32:10).

When Ezra learned that many of the Israelites had married heathen women (a practice strictly forbidden by God), he tore his garments, pulled hair from his head and beard, and sat down appalled. Then he fell to his knees and wept as he prayed. Many people were so moved by this that they wept with him. And well they should. Sin is a terrible thing. It offends the Lord. It grieves spiritually sensitive people. And it brings untold misery to the transgressor. In this instance, the men of Israel had to send their foreign wives and their children back to their homeland, which must have caused great pain. But this drastic step was necessary to keep the nation from spiritual disaster.

One day I responded to eighteen letters written by husbands, wives, parents, and grandparents who were deeply hurt because someone close to them had fallen into a sin that was breaking up a family circle. Answering these people reminded me how much pain disobedience causes, and it impressed on me that sin is the ultimate cause of all the anguish and sorrow in our world. Although suffering is unavoidable because of sin's effect on the human family, many people intensify their miseries by recklessly plunging into immorality.

We need a deeper sense of grief over sin and a greater burden for people caught in its snares. The heartbreak of sin is too devastating to underestimate. —H. V. Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

One of the greatest of all evils is indifference toward all evil.

Ezra 9:1-9⁺ Pride at the Core

October 21, 2015

Read: Ezra 9:1-9⁺ | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 62–64; 1 Timothy 1⁺

Ezra ... was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses. Ezra 7:6⁺

“He thinks he’s really something!” That was my friend’s assessment of a fellow Christian we knew. We thought we saw in him a spirit of pride. We were saddened when we learned that he soon was caught in some serious misdeeds. By elevating himself, he had found nothing but trouble. We realized that could happen to us as well.

It can be easy to minimize the terrible sin of pride in our own hearts. The more we learn and the more success we enjoy, the more likely we are to think we’re “really something.” Pride is at the core of our nature.

#Humility lets us trust in the goodness of our forgiving God.

In Scripture, Ezra is described as “a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6⁺). King Artaxerxes appointed him to lead an expedition of Hebrew exiles back to Jerusalem. Ezra could have been a prime candidate to succumb to the sin of pride. Yet he didn’t. Ezra didn’t only know God’s law; he lived it.

After his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra learned that Jewish men had married women who served other gods, defying God’s express directions (Ezra 9:1-2⁺). He tore his clothes in grief and prayed in heartfelt repentance (Ezra 9:5-15⁺). A higher purpose guided Ezra’s knowledge and position: his love for God and for His people. He prayed, “Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence” (Ezra 9:15⁺).

Ezra understood the scope of their sins. But in humility he repented and trusted in the goodness of our forgiving God.

Lord, fill us with such a love for You that we think first of what will please You, not ourselves. Free us from the subtle captivity of our own pride.

Pride leads to every other vice: It is the complete anti-God state of mind. C. S. Lewis

Ezra 9:3 When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled.

- rent (KJV): Jos 7:6⁺ 2Ki 18:37⁺ 2Ki 19:1⁺ Job 1:20 Jer 36:24

- off (KJV): Lev 21:5+ Ne 13:25+ Isa 15:2 Jer 7:29 Jer 48:37,38 Eze 7:18+ Mic 1:16+
- sat (KJV): Ne 1:4+ Job 2:12,13 Ps 66:3 Ps 143:4 Eze 3:15+ Da 4:19+ Da 8:27+

When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled

Bob Utley - "I tore my garment" This verse describes a series of Jewish acts of mourning (e.g., Ezra 9:5+; Ezra 10:1,6+; Jos. 7:6+; 2 Sam. 1:11-12+; 2 Chr. 34:27+; Esth. 4:1+; Isa. 36:22+; Jer. 41:5). Apparently, Ezra did not know about these foreign marriages and was greatly appalled when he heard about it. His shock and sincerity also moved the exiles to reform their practices. [See Grieving Rites](#) ■ **"my garment and my robe"** The first term (BDB 93 II, the last entry) simply means the outer piece of clothing. It can refer to common clothing or special clothing. The second term (BDB 591) denotes a special robe worn by the leading people of society or religion (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1018). There is a possible word play between these terms and "unfaithfulness" (BDB 591) of Ezra 9:2+. ■ **"and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard"** One sign of mourning was the shaving of the head (cf. Job 1:20; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 7:29; Jer 16:6; Jer 41:5; Jer 48:37; Micah 1:16+), but Ezra's grief was so intense he pulled out hair from his head and face. This is the only occurrence of this act in the OT. ■ **"sat down"** Sitting on the floor was also a sign of mourning (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:16+; 2 Sam 13:31+; Neh. 1:4+; Isa. 47:1; Ezek. 26:16). ■ **appalled** - This VERB (BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Poel* PARTICIPLE) means "to be appalled," "awestruck," "horrified." It is used in Ezra 9:3+ and Ezra 9:4+. Its use is common in the seventh-century prophets and Daniel. Sin horrifies God and should horrify His people. It brings death and destruction. The Jews should have known this from their recent experience of the exile.

Yamauchi on **appalled** - Means 'to be appalled or stupefied'.... Rare is the soul who is so shocked at disobedience that he is appalled. (The English word originally meant 'to make pale.') (See [Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther - Page 12](#))

F B Meyer - It has been truly said that communion with the Lord dries many tears, but it starts many more.

Believer's Study Bible - The two expressions "tore my garment" and "plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard" describe actions associated with intense grief and mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34; Job 1:20). They point here to the depth of Ezra's concern for the people individually and as a nation. His sincere agony finally resulted in confession and intercession (vv. 5-15).

Ezra 9:4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering.

- trembled (KJV): Ezr 10:3+ 2Ch 34:27+ Ps 119:136+ Isa 66:2 Eze 9:4+
- until (KJV): Ex 29:39+ Da 9:21+ Ac 3:1+

Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering

Bob Utley - "everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel" This is a powerful metaphor for God's faithful people (cf. Ezra 10:3+; Isa. 66:2,5)! The term (BDB 353) is used of people being afraid (cf. Jdg. 7:3+), but also of God and those things connected to Him (e.g., Exod. 19:16,18+; Deut. 5:23-27+). (1) the ark (1 Sam. 4:13+), (2) His word (Isa. 66:2,5; Ezra 9:4+). (3) His commandments (Ezra 10:3+). (4) His judgment (Isa. 41:5; Ezek. 26:16,18; Ezek 32:10) ■ **"until the evening offering"** The morning offering was at 9 a.m., the evening offering was 3 p.m. (cf. Exod. 12:6+; Dan. 9:21+; Acts 3:1+). Ezra sat appalled in the company of others sensitive to God and His word all day long. In a sense this is a confession of corporate sin (cf. Ezra 9:5-9+), like that of Moses and Daniel.

Henry Morris - **trembled at the words** The written words of God are true and powerful, and men will be judged by their response to the Scriptures (John 5:45+; John 12:48+; Revelation 20:12+). Instead of mocking and ignoring God's Word, men would do well to "tremble" at its commands and warnings.

G Campbell Morgan - I sat astonished until the evening oblation.—Ezra 9.4+.

On Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem the princes acquainted him with the failure and sin of the people. During the sixty years which had elapsed since the Return under Zerubbabel, there had been no return to idols, but there had been the wilful breaking of the law of God against inter-mixture with the peoples of the land, and the chief offenders had been the princes and the rulers. This picture of Ezra in presence of this confession is full of light. It is that of a man tempest-tossed with righteous indignation, and profound Fief. As the storm of his passion subsided in which he had rent his garments, and plucked off his beard, he sank into silent astonishment until the evening oblation. Then he fell upon his knees before God, and poured out his soul in prayer. The prayer is recorded.

Beginning with his confession of personal shame, he gathered into his cry the whole of the people, identifying himself with them as he spoke of "our iniquities ... our guiltiness." He went back over all the history in contemplation as he knelt before God, and saw clearly that it had been one long story of failure and of consequent disaster. He then remembered and spoke of the grace of God as it had been manifested in the making possible of the return of the remnant through the favour of the kings of Persia. Then the surging sorrow of his heart concerning the new future found expression in free and full confession, until at last, without any petition for deliverance, he cast the people upon God, recognizing His righteousness and their inability to stand before Him. This is a revelation of the only attitude in which a man may become a mediator. He must first have a sense of sin. This is the outcome of the deeper sense of the righteousness and grace of God. It finds expression in a confession of sin in which he identifies himself with the sinners.

Ezra 9:5 But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;

- heaviness (KJV): or, affliction
- I fell (KJV): 2Ch 6:13⁺ Ps 95:6 Lu 22:41⁺ Ac 21:5⁺ Eph 3:14⁺
- spread (KJV): Ex 9:29,33⁺ 1Ki 8:22,38,54⁺ Ps 141:2 Ps 143:6 Isa 1:15⁺

But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;

Yamauchi - The 'evening sacrifice' took place about three p.m. (cf. Exodus 12:6⁺; Acts 3:1⁺). The informants had probably visited Ezra in the morning, so that he must have sat in this position for many hours. The time of the evening sacrifice was also the appointed time for prayer and confession." (See [Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther - Page 12](#))

Bob Utley - "humiliation" - This is the Hebrew term (BDB 777) for humiliation by fasting (cf. Ezra 8:21⁺). Ezra had grieved all day with his spiritual companions. This represents sorrow and grief brought on by the knowledge of human sin and rebellion and its possible consequences for the whole group of restored Jews in Judah. ■ **"I fell on my knees"** The normal stance for Jewish prayer was standing with hands and eyes uplifted. Whenever kneeling or prostration is mentioned in the Bible it signifies intensity (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:54; 2 Chr. 6:13⁺; Ps. 95:6; Isa. 45:23; Dan. 6:10⁺). ■ **"stretched out my hands"** This is literally "with palms up," which was the normal position for Jewish prayer (cf. Exod. 9:29,33⁺; 1 Kings 8:22⁺; 2 Chr. 6:12⁺; Job 11:13; Ps. 28:2; Ps 44:20; Ps 68:31; Ps 88:9; Ps 134:2; Ps 141:2; Ps 143:6; Isa. 1:15⁺). ■ **"the Lord my God"** This is the covenant title for the deity of Israel (e.g., Gen. 2:4⁺; Deut. 6:4-5⁺). YHWH refers to deity as the covenant-making Savior, while *Elohim* refers to deity as the creator, provider, and sustainer of all life.

Ryrie - 9:5-15 Similar to the prayers in Dan. 9 and Neh. 9⁺, this is also one of the great prayers of confession in the Bible. Only in verse 6 does Ezra use singular pronouns ("I," "my"); in the remainder of the prayer, though he is personally guiltless, Ezra associates himself with the guilt of his people. He acknowledges past sins (v. 7), present deliverance (vv. 8-9; the Temple was the peg that supported the whole nation), present sins (vv. 10-12), deserved punishment (vv. 13-14), and the righteousness of God (v. 15). He made no specific request or excuse, but threw himself upon God.

Matthew Henry - **Ezra's confession of sins** - Ezra 9:5-15⁺. The sacrifice, especially the evening sacrifice, was a type of the blessed Lamb of God, who in the evening of the world, was to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Ezra's address is a penitent confession of sin, the sin of his people. But let this be the comfort of true penitents, that though their sins reach to the heavens, God's mercy is in the heavens. Ezra, speaking of sin, speaks as one much ashamed. Holy shame is as necessary in true repentance as holy sorrow. Ezra speaks as much amazed. The discoveries of guilt cause amazement; the more we think of sin, the worse it looks. Say, God be merciful to me sinner. Ezra speaks as one much afraid. There is not a surer or sadder presage of ruin, than turning to sin, after great judgments, and great deliverances. Every one in the church of God, has to wonder that he has not wearied out the Lord's patience, and brought destruction upon himself. What then must be the case of the ungodly? But though the true penitent has nothing to plead in his own behalf, the heavenly Advocate pleads most powerfully for him.

David Guzik - Ezra was one of many in the Bible who prayed on his knees.

- Solomon prayed on his knees (1 Kings 8:54⁺).
- The Psalmist called us to kneel before God (Psalm 95:6).
- Daniel prayed on his knees (Daniel 6:10⁺).
- People presented themselves to Jesus in a kneeling posture (Matthew 17:14⁺, Matthew 20:20⁺, Mark 1:40⁺).

- Stephen prayed on his knees (Acts 7:60⁺).
- Peter prayed on his knees (Acts 9:40⁺).
- Paul prayed on his knees (Acts 20:36⁺, Ephesians 3:14⁺).
- Some early Christians prayed on their knees (Acts 21:5⁺).
- Most importantly, Jesus prayed on His knees (Luke 22:41⁺).

The Bible has enough prayer not on the knees to show us that it isn't required, but it also has enough prayer on the knees to show us that it is good.. Ezra also spread out his hands to the LORD. This was the most common posture of prayer in the Old Testament. Many modern people close their eyes, bow their heads, and fold their hands as they pray, but the Old Testament tradition was to spread out the hands toward heaven in a gesture of surrender, openness, and ready reception.

Ezra 9:5-9⁺ Tree Of Rest

Read: Ezra 9:5-9⁺ | Bible in a Year: 1 Kings 12⁺-13; Luke 22:1-20⁺

There is a remnant according to the election of grace. —Romans 11:5⁺

The lone tree in the field across from my office remained a mystery. Acres of trees had been cut down so the farmer could grow corn. But one tree remained standing, its branches reaching up and spreading out. The mystery was solved when I learned the tree was spared for a purpose. Farmers long ago traditionally left one tree standing so that they and their animals would have a cool place to rest when the hot summer sun was beating down.

At times we find that we alone have survived something, and we don't know why. Soldiers coming home from combat and patients who've survived a life-threatening illness struggle to know why they survived when others did not.

The Old Testament speaks of a remnant of Israelites whom God spared when the nation was sent into exile. The remnant preserved God's law and later rebuilt the temple (Ezra 9:9⁺). The apostle Paul referred to himself as part of the remnant of God (Rom. 11:1,5⁺). He was spared to become God's messenger to Gentiles (Ro 11:13⁺).

If we stand where others have fallen, it's to raise our hands to heaven in praise and to spread our arms as shade for the weary. The Lord enables us to be a tree of rest for others.

Thank You, Father, that You are my place of rest.
And that all You have brought me through
can be used by You to encourage others.
Bring praise to Yourself through me.

Hope can be ignited by a spark of encouragement.

INSIGHT: In the midst of the joy of God's grace in allowing a remnant to return to their homeland, Ezra mourned. He mourned because the people of Israel were not only physically distant from God, but spiritually distant as well. Yet God in His grace did more than enable the physical return of the remnant; He also preserved a spiritual remnant. Upon hearing the law of God, the people recommitted themselves to Him ([Ezra 10:1-4](#)).

Ezra 9:5-15⁺ Mom's Translation

January 6, 2006

Read: Ezra 9:5-15⁺ | Bible in a Year: Genesis 16⁺-17; Matthew 5:27-48⁺

Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. —Ezra 7:10⁺

Four pastors were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. One liked a particular version best because of its simple, beautiful English. Another preferred a more scholarly edition because it was closer to the original Hebrew and Greek. Still another liked a contemporary version because of its up-to-date vocabulary.

The fourth minister was silent for a moment, then said, "I like my mother's translation best." Surprised, the other three men said they didn't know his mother had translated the Bible. "Yes," he replied. "She translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw."

Instead of discussing translation preferences, this pastor reminded them that the most important focus should be learning God's Word and doing it. That was the top priority of Ezra's life. As a scribe, he studied the Law, obeyed it, and taught it to the Israelites

(Ezra 7:10⁺). For example, God commanded His people not to intermarry with neighboring nations who served pagan gods (Ezra 9:1-2⁺). Ezra confessed the nation's sin to God (9:10-12) and corrected the people, who then repented (Ezra 10:10-12⁺).

Let's follow Ezra's example by seeking the Word of God and translating it into life.

When we take time to read God's Word,
Our heart is filled with pleasure;
So let's relate the truth we've heard-
With others share the treasure.
-Hess

**The best commentary on the Bible
is a person who puts it into practice.**

Ezra 9:6 and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.

- I am ashamed (KJV): Job 40:4 Job 42:6 Jer 3:3,24,25⁺ Jer 6:15 Jer 8:12 Jer 31:19⁺ Eze 16:63⁺ Da 9:7,8⁺ Ro 6:21⁺
- our iniquities (KJV): Ge 13:13⁺ Ps 38:4 Isa 1:18⁺ Isa 59:12
- trespass (KJV): or, guiltiness
- grown up (KJV): 2Ch 28:9⁺ Lu 15:21⁺ Rev 18:5⁺

and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens

Bob Utley - "I am ashamed. . .for our iniquities" Here is a unique combination between individual and corporate responsibility. Ezra, as all great OT leaders, identifies himself with a sinning, covenant community (e.g., Dan. 9:4-19⁺; Neh. 9:5-38⁺). **See Shame** ■ "ashamed and embarrassed" The two VERBS (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal*/PERFECT) are often found together in the prophets. (1) Isa. 30:3-5; Isa 41:11; Isa 45:16,17; Isa 50:7⁺; Isa 54:4 (2) Jer. 20:11; Jer 22:22⁺; Jer 31:19⁺ (3) Ezek. 16:52,54⁺; Ezek 36:22⁺ ■ "our iniquities. . .our guilt" This is prose, but structured in parallel thought. The sin of these leaders is so big that it reaches heaven (i.e., God takes notice, e.g., Jer. 51:9; Rev. 18:5⁺). "Risen above our heads" may be an idiom for an overwhelming flood (cf. Ps. 38:4) or a great wall between us and God (cf. Ps. 40:12).

Believer's Study Bible - Ezra was staggered and overwhelmed by the iniquity of the people. He assumed a humble position on his knees with torn garments and disheveled hair, and lifted his hands to heaven pouring out his confession of sin in grief (v. 5). He humbly identified himself with his people, using a figure of speech to express the enormity of their sin. The "iniquities" of the people have not only "risen higher than our heads" (have been overwhelming), they have "grown up to the heavens," i.e., attracted the attention of God Himself.

Ezra 9:7 "Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity and to plunder and to open shame, as it is this day.

- Since the days (KJV): Nu 32:14⁺ 2Ch 29:6⁺ 2Ch 30:7⁺ Ne 9:32-34⁺ Ps 106:6,7⁺ La 5:7 Da 9:5-8⁺ Zec 1:4,5 Mt 23:30-33⁺ Ac 7:51,52⁺
- for our iniquities (KJV): Lev 26:14-46⁺ De 4:25-28⁺ De 28:15-68⁺ De 29:22-28⁺ De 30:17-19⁺ De 31:20-22⁺ De 32:15-28⁺ 1Sa 12:15⁺ 1Ki 9:6-9⁺ Ne 9:30⁺
- into the hand (KJV): 2Ki 17:5-8⁺ 2Ki 18:9-12⁺ 2Ki 24:1-4⁺ 2Ch 36:16-19⁺ Ne 9:36,37⁺ Da 9:11-14⁺
- to confusion (KJV): Da 9:7,8⁺
- as it is this day (KJV): Ne 9:32⁺ Jer 25:18⁺ Jer 44:22

Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity and to plunder and to open shame, as it is this day.

Bob Utley - Ezra recognizes that the very rebellion which had caused the military defeat of the Israelites throughout the years, has

returned (cf. Neh. 9⁺). These leaders had not "trembled at the words of God" (cf. Ezra 9:4⁺)! They had flaunted their positions and power. The curses (cf. Deut. 27⁺-29) of mixing with Canaan had manifested again! Nehemiah gives an historical account of Israel's history in Neh. 9:6-35⁺. It was a history of their unfaithfulness, but YHWH's mercy and faithfulness. ■ **"have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands"** This is an idiom of defeat. (1) Menaham and Pekah (kings of Israel) were given into the hand of Tiglath-Pileser (Assyria) (2) Hoshea was given into the hand of Shalmaneser or Sargon II (Assyria) (3) Manasseh (king of Judah) was given into the hand of Esarhaddon (Assyria) (4) Josiah was given into the hand of Pharaoh Necho II (Egypt) (5) Jehoachin, Jehoakim, and Zedekiah were given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar II (Babylon) ■ Again Ezra's prose is poetic and patterned. It is represented in English as a series of INFINITIVES. (1) to the sword (2) to captivity (3) to plunder (4) to open shame

Ezra 9:8 "But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage."

- little space (KJV): Heb. moment
- grace hath (KJV): Ezr 9:9⁺ Ne 1:11⁺ Ne 9:31⁺ Hab 3:2⁺
- a remnant (KJV): Ezr 9:14⁺ 2Ki 19:4,30,31⁺ Isa 1:9⁺ Jer 42:2 Jer 44:14 Eze 6:8,9⁺ Eze 14:22⁺ Zec 8:6,12 Ro 9:27⁺ Ro 11:5,6⁺
- a nail (KJV): or a pin, i.e. a constant and sure abode, Ec 12:1⁺ Isa 22:23-25 Zec 10:4

But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage.

Bob Utley - Notice that the unchanging character of the God of covenant mercy, and not the people's performance, is the key to His people's hope (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38⁺). Yet, obedience is a covenant requirement. In the OT, it was the condition of blessing that fallen mankind could not achieve; in the NT it is a gift of YHWH to which fallen mankind must respond in faithfulness. Obedience is not the basis of covenant hope, but the result of God's merciful character (cf. Jer. 31:31-34⁺, the new covenant). The goal of both the OT and NT is a people who reflect God's character. Obedience is still crucial (cf. Luke 6:46⁺; John 15⁺). ■ **"to leave us an escaped remnant"** These people were the beginning of God's new covenant people (cf. Ezra 9:13-15⁺). If they wilfully sinned, what would become of the promises of God to the world (cf. Ezra 9:9⁺, "in the sight of the kings of Persia"). Remnant terminology and theology is most common in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 1:9⁺; Isa 4:3⁺; Isa 10:20-22⁺; Isa 11:11-16⁺; Isa 46:3) and in Amos (Amos 1:8; Amos 5:3,15; Amos 9:12⁺). [See The Remnant, three senses](#) ■ **"a peg in His holy place"** This is a metaphor from Israel's nomadic period which describes their new foothold in the Promised Land. It was drawn from putting up secure tents (cf. Isa. 22:23; Isa 33:20; Zech. 10:4). It was also used as an idiom for blessing (cf. Isa. 54:2-3). ■ **"that our God may"** Ezra prays for two merciful acts of God (these may be parallel, the first is an idiom for the second): (1) enlighten our eyes (2) revive amidst our bondage. This is not what they deserved. They deserved judgment, but because God wants to use them to bless a world (cf. Ezra 9:9⁺; Gen. 12:3⁺; Exod. 19:5-6⁺) Ezra prays to His compassion and larger redemptive purpose (cf. Isa. 60:1-3,19-20).

Ezra 9:9 "For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem."

- we were bondmen (KJV): Ne 9:36,37⁺
- yet our God (KJV): Ps 106:45,46⁺ Ps 136:23,24 Eze 11:16⁺
- in the sight (KJV): Ezr 1:1-4,7-11⁺ Ezr 6:1-12⁺ Ezr 7:6,8,11-28⁺
- to set up (KJV): Ezr 6:14,15⁺ Hag 1:9 Zec 4:6-10⁺
- repair (KJV): Heb. set up
- a wall (KJV): Or rather, a hedge or fence, {gader,} such as were made for sheep-folds. Isa 5:2,5⁺ Da 9:25⁺ Zec 2:5

For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem

Bob Utley - Here Ezra uses contrasting statements to make his theological point. (1) YHWH has not forsaken us (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Gen. 24:27⁺; Isa. 49:14⁺; Isa 55:7). (2) YHWH has extended lovingkindness to us (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf 7:28). There are several places in the OT where this word, forsaken (BDB 736), is used in contrasting senses. YHWH has not forsaken or abandoned, but His people have forsaken and abandoned Him (cf. Deut. 31:16-17⁺; 2 Chr.

12:5⁺; 2 Chr 13:10-11⁺; 2 Chr 15:2⁺; 2 Chr 24:20⁺; and Ezra 9:9-10⁺, taken from NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 365). ■ **"lovingkindness"** This is the Hebrew NOUN *hesed* (BDB 338). It developed a special connotation as the covenant word which describes God's loyalty and love to His covenant people. [SEE Lovingkindness \(Hesed\)](#) ■ **"to restore its ruins"** This may be an allusion to the restoration prophecy of Isa. 44:24-28⁺ (esp. Ezra 9:26⁺). ■ **"a wall in Judah and Jerusalem"** This is another metaphor and it does not relate directly to the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Zech. 2:4-5). The Hebrew term (BDB 154) means "an enclosing wall" or "a rock wall showing ownership"; so this refers to the covenant people being restored to the land of promise, in order that all the world can see the mercy and power of God in fulfilling His covenant promises (e.g., Gen. 15:12-21⁺)!

Out of the Ruins Tim Gustafson

He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins. Ezra 9:9⁺

In the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem you'll find Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue. Built in the 19th century, the synagogue was dynamited by commandos during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

For years the site lay in ruins. Then, in 2014, rebuilding began. As city officials set a piece of rubble as the cornerstone, one of them quoted from Lamentations: "Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old" (Lam 5:21).

Lamentations is Jeremiah's funeral song for Jerusalem. With graphic imagery the prophet describes the impact of war on his city. Verse 21 is his heartfelt prayer for God to intervene. Still, the prophet wonders if that is even possible. He concludes his anguished song with this fearful caveat: "unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure" (Lam 5:22). Decades later, God did answer that prayer as the exiles returned to Jerusalem.

Our lives too may seem to be in ruins. Troubles of our own making and conflicts we can't avoid may leave us devastated. But we have a Father who understands. Gently, patiently, He clears away the rubble, repurposes it, and builds something better. It takes time, but we can always trust Him. He specializes in rebuilding projects.

Reflect & Pray

Lord, You have reclaimed us, and You are remaking us. Thank You for Your love and Your care despite our self-centered and destructive ways.

Thank You for true forgiveness and unity in You.

God will one day restore all the beauty lost before.

Today's Insights - According to The Bible Knowledge Commentary, one characteristic of the book of Lamentations is the pattern of its laments. "Lamentations is a series of five laments, or funeral dirges; each chapter is a separate lament. A lament was a funeral poem or song written and recited for someone who had just died (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17-27⁺). The song usually emphasized the good qualities of the departed and the tragedy or loss felt by those mourning his death. Jeremiah was lamenting the tragic 'death' of the city of Jerusalem and the results of her demise that were being experienced by the people. Thus he used the form of a funeral lament to convey the feeling of sadness and loss being experienced by the survivors."

Ezra 9:10 "Now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments,

- what shall we say (KJV): Ge 44:16 Jos 7:8⁺ La 3:22 Da 9:4-16⁺ Ro 3:19⁺

Now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments

Henry Morris - forsaken thy commandments. The rebellious iniquity of the human heart is astonishing! Here are God's chosen people, only one generation after their miraculous deliverance from captive exile, already falling back into the same sins which had sent them away into captivity in the first place. They were already "doing according to their abominations"--that is, the idolatrous practices--of the Canaanites and the other pagan people that had led to their first downfall. Furthermore, their leaders were among the worst offenders (Ezra 9:2⁺).

Ezra 9:11 which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end and with their impurity.

- by thy servants (KJV): Heb. by the hand of thy servants
- The land (KJV): Ezr 9:1⁺ Lev 18:24-30⁺ De 12:31⁺ De 18:12⁺ 2Ch 33:2⁺
- the filthiness (KJV): Ezr 6:21⁺ Eze 36:25-27⁺ 2Co 7:1⁺
- one end to another (KJV): Heb. mouth to mouth, 2Ki 21:16⁺ *marg:

which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end and with their impurity

Bob Utley - "Your servants the prophets" See [SEE Servant Leadership](#) ■ **"unclean. . .uncleanness"** The term (BDB 622) originally referred to the ceremonial impurity caused by a woman's monthly menstrual cycle. It came to be a metaphor for "uncleanness" (cf. 2 Chr. 29:5⁺; Ezek. 7:19-20⁺; Zech. 13:1⁺). In the Mosaic legislation any fluids which come out of the human body makes one ceremonially unclean, unable to participate in religious and social activities. ■ **"their abominations"** This usually involves the sin of idolatry (e.g., Lev. 18:3,24-30⁺) and disobedience (e.g., Jer. 7:25-26), which caused the exile in the first place. Now it was starting over again in the same way. [SEE Abomination](#) ■ **"from end to end"** This is literally "from mouth unto mouth" (*Young's Literal Translation of the Bible*, p. 320). The term (BDB 804) is often used in idiomatic phrases: (1) "ask his mouth" (ask personally), Gen. 24:57⁺ (2) "mouth of the sword," Gen. 34:26 (3) "mouth to mouth" (face to face), Num. 12:8; [2 Kgs. 10:21](#); 21:16; Jer. 32:4⁺; Jer 34:3 (4) "with one mouth" (unanimous), Jos. 9:2⁺ (5) "mouth to mouth" (devour), Isa. 9:12⁺ (6) "mouth to mouth" (resuscitation), 2 Kgs. 4:34 (7) "hand over mouth" (respect), Job 29:9 (8) "mouth to mouth" (fill completely), 2 Kgs. 21:16; Ezra 9:11⁺ (Examples taken from NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 583).

Ezra 9:12 'So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.'

- give not (KJV): Ex 23:32⁺ Ex 34:16⁺ De 7:3⁺ Jos 23:12,13⁺
- nor seek their peace (KJV): De 23:6⁺ 2Ch 19:2⁺ 2Jn 1:10,11⁺
- that ye may (KJV): De 6:1,2⁺ Jos 1:6-9⁺
- and eat (KJV): Isa 1:19⁺
- and leave it (KJV): Ge 18:18,19⁺ Ps 112:1,2 Pr 13:22⁺ Pr 20:7

So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.

Bob Utley - **9:11-12** This seems to be a summary statement encompassing insights from Moses (cf. Exod. 23:32-35⁺; Exod 34:10-17⁺; Deut. 7:2-3⁺; Deut 20:10-18⁺) and the Prophets. In Jewish theology only prophets wrote Scripture, so Moses was considered a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-22⁺) and more (cf. Num. 12:6-8⁺). ■ **"never seek their peace or their prosperity"** This may be an allusion to Deut. 23:6⁺. The VERB "seek" (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT) may refer to treaties (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 994). Israel's Mosaic prohibition of any social or religious contact with idolatry (the first two VERBS are *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense – "do not give your daughters," "do not take their daughters," cf. Exod. 23:32⁺; Exod 34:12⁺) continues!

Ezra 9:13 "After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have requited us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us an escaped remnant as this,

- after all (KJV): Ne 9:32⁺ Eze 24:13,14 Ga 3:4⁺
- hast punished (KJV): etc. Heb. hast withheld beneath our iniquities
- less (KJV): Ps 103:10 La 3:22,39,40 Hab 3:2⁺
- hast given us (KJV): Ps 106:45,46⁺

After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have requited us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us an escaped remnant as this,

Bob Utley - **You our God have requited us less than our iniquities deserve** This is an idiomatic way of asserting God's great love and mercy towards the Jews, but they took advantage of it! They are back in the promised land by God's forgiveness and restitution, but now they are violating His word again! The literal idiom is "held back downward" (BDB 362, KB 359 and BDB 641).

Ezra 9:14 shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape?

- we again (KJV): Joh 5:14⁺ Ro 6:1⁺ 2Pe 2:20,21⁺
- join in (KJV): Ezr 9:2⁺ Ex 23:32⁺ Judges 2:2⁺ Ne 13:23-27⁺
- wouldst not thou (KJV): Ex 32:10⁺ Nu 16:21,45⁺ De 9:8,14⁺
- no remnant (KJV): Ezr 9:8⁺ De 32:26,27⁺ Isa 1:9⁺ Jer 46:28 Eze 6:8⁺

shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape?

Bob Utley - YHWH expresses anger towards an Israel to whom He chose to reveal Himself, so as to reveal Himself to the entire world. Their special knowledge brought great responsibility (cf. Deut. 7:11⁺; Deut 11:16-17⁺; Deut 29:25-29⁺).

Ezra 9:15 “O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”

- thou art righteous (KJV): Ne 9:33,34⁺ Da 9:7-11,14⁺ Ro 10:3⁺
- for we remain (KJV): La 3:22,23
- in our trespasses (KJV): Isa 64:6,7 Eze 33:10 Zec 3:3,4 Joh 8:21,24⁺ 1Co 15:17⁺
- we cannot (KJV): Job 9:2,3 Ps 130:3 Ps 143:2 Ro 3:19⁺

O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this

Derek Kidner - “Ezra had not even the heart to plead, as Moses had, that God’s name would suffer in such a case. His prayer was naked confession, without excuses, without the pressure of so much as a request.” (See [Ezra and Nehemiah - Page 9](#))

Bob Utley - **"You are righteous"** YHWH's character is exactly opposite of His people's! He is faithful (cf. Ezra 9:9⁺) and righteous, but they are unfaithful (cf. Ezra 9:2⁺, even their political and religious leaders) and sinful (cf. Ezra 9:6-7,10,13⁺). See note at Ezra 9:9⁺. [See Righteousness](#) ■ **"no one can stand before You"** This is the theological summary of the results of human rebellion, both individually and corporately (e.g., Gen. 6:5,11-12,13⁺; Job 4:17; Job 9:2; Job 25:4; Jer. 17:9).