

Ezra Lesson 10

Ezra Chapter 10

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Introduction: In this final chapter, Ezra demanded separation in verses 1-5. He assembled the people in verses 6-14; and separation was implemented in verses 15-44.

I. The People Confess Their Sin

Ezr 10:1 Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

Further insight into the intensity of Ezra's prayer is noted in that he had "confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God." One thing that stands out is that Ezra had a great understanding and fear of God's holiness.

Because of his adherence to God's holy nature, he himself was deeply vexed by the sin he had discovered. Upon rising from prayer, he found others of Israel, "a very great congregation of men and women and children," had joined him and with him "wept sore." A large number of God's people joined in the godly sorrow over sin in their ranks.

Ezr 10:2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Ezr 10:3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Ezr 10:4 Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.

Evidently, some of those who joined with Ezra in penance were guilty parties. One named Shechaniah stood and likewise confessed the sin of the people. Exactly who Shechaniah was is not clear. In chapter 8:3-5, the sons of Shechaniah are mentioned among those who returned with Ezra. Implied is he was of that party. However, he uses the first person plural we in confessing the

sin. Whether that is an editorial we or whether he himself was involved in the sin is not clear.

In any event, he saw hope in the matter. Shechaniah proposed putting away all the alien wives and even the children born of them. This presents many issues. First, what he proposed would be of profound emotional distress. Yet, he was willing to do something very difficult in order to return to a holy and right position before God. Moreover, he proposed how this be “done according to the law” (i.e., of Moses). This leads us to the difficult matter of divorce.

What he may have had in mind is Deuteronomy 24:1 where in the law of Moses, divorce was allowed if and only if there was found “uncleanness” in the woman. (It was a patriarchal culture with the man holding the majority of the rights.)

Deu 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

The word uncleanness there seemed to imply moral impurity (i.e., adultery, fornication etc. It may be Shechaniah took the position that these pagan, gentile women were by their very class unclean, if not personally so. They therefore had grounds under the law of Moses to so proceed. In any event, it was a very difficult situation. Finally, Shechaniah urged Ezra to so order this position and the people would back him. He urged him to “be of good courage, and do it.”

Ezr 10:5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swear.

Ezr 10:6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.

First, Ezra enjoined the chief priests and the Levites “to swear that they should do according to this word.” He then went to see Johanan who quite evidently had not joined with the congregation in weeping with Ezra before the Temple. Johanan was not the high priest, but was of his family and a man of high influence. Evidently, Ezra sought to get Johanan to notify him of the proposal at hand.

We are not told of his response. However, the fact Ezra would eat nor drink anything after departing from Johanan’s chamber gives some clue to his attitude. Ezra’s fasting may have only been for the rest of the day, but in any event, “he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.”

Ezr 10:7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem;

Ezr 10:8 And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

A proclamation was sent through Judah and Jerusalem ordering “all the children of the captivity” to assemble at Jerusalem within three days. If they would not come, Ezra had authority from the king of Persia to inflict any penalty he deemed necessary. He therefore warned that anyone ignoring this injunction would have all their property confiscated and they themselves would be separated from the congregation (i.e., kicked out of Israel).

Ezr 10:9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.

It was the ninth month of the Jewish year (December) and the twentieth day. It therefore was cool weather at the least. The entire congregation of the returned remnant came to Jerusalem and sat in the street (or courtyard) of the house of God. Moreover, they were “trembling because of this matter, and of the great rain.”

Word had quickly spread as to why they were being assembled. They no doubt had heard of the wrath of Ezra with the authority of the king of Persia backing him. Moreover, they sat out in the open in a pouring, cold, December rain.

Ezr 10:10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.

Ezr 10:11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

Ezra stood and wasted no time in getting to the point. “Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.” His remedy was simple.

- (1) “Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers,”
- (2) “do his pleasure” (i.e., do His will or what is pleasing to Him),
- (3) “and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.” The instruction was simple: divorce.

Ezr 10:12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

Ezr 10:13 But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.

Ezr 10:14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

Ezr 10:15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

The congregation agreed. However, they suggested this was a matter which could not be resolved in a day or two “for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.” A systematic procedure was therefore appointed in which those who were guilty would come at an appointed time along with the elders and judges of each city and settle each marriage in an orderly manner, “until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.”

What is implied is that God apparently already had begun to bring judgment upon the people and they were aware of it. A small number of men were appointed to oversee the administration of this difficult matter.

Ezr 10:16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

Ezr 10:17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

About ten days later (“the first day of the tenth month”), Ezra along with others in leadership sat down one by one with those who were separated “to examine the matter.” It took them three full months to make “an end with all the men that had taken strange wives.”

II. Those Guilty of Intermarriage

Ezr 10:18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah.

Ezr 10:19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.

Ezr 10:20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah.

Ezr 10:21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah.

Ezr 10:22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

Ezr 10:23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

Ezr 10:24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

Ezr 10:25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah.

Ezr 10:26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.

Ezr 10:27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.

Ezr 10:28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

Ezr 10:29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.

Ezr 10:30 And of the sons of Pahathmoab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.

Ezr 10:31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

Ezr 10:32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

Ezr 10:33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

Ezr 10:34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,

Ezr 10:35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh,

Ezr 10:36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

Ezr 10:37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau,

Ezr 10:38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei,

Ezr 10:39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah,

Ezr 10:40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

Ezr 10:41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah,

Ezr 10:42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

Ezr 10:43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.

A listing of those who were so processed is listed. It is of note that in verse 18, the sons of Jeshua are named. In Zechariah 3:3-4, Jeshua is represented in a vision as having filthy skirts. It may be he was agreeable in allowing his sons to intermingle with the ungodly.

Zec 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

Zec 3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

Other sons of priests were also among the guilty parties along with some Levites. Nevertheless, they all agreed “that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.”

Ezr 10:44 All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children. The question remains if they did so out of a heart of repentance before God, or if they merely bowed to the absolute authority granted to Ezra to execute judgment as he saw fit in Israel.

In any event, the impurity was purged from Israel. Observant Jews to this day seek to marry only of the stock of Israel.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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