

***1 Ezra 7-10 Ezra Comes to Jerusalem and Finds a Mess**

***2 Read:** There is a gap of almost 60 years between the events of Ezra chapters 6 and 7. The account in the Book of Esther occurred during this time, in the reign of Xerxes the Great, who ruled from 486–465 B.C. **Artaxerxes, his son, became king in 465, and Ezra returned to Jerusalem in 458. The Temple had been standing for about 58 years.** Life Application Bible

***3 Ezra 7** ¹ Many years later [60-70], during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, there was a man named Ezra. He was the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, ² son of Shallum, son of **Zadok**, son of **Ahitub**, ³ son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, ⁴ son of Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, ⁵ son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of **Aaron** the high priest.

“Ezra” is a short form of Azariah, which means “Yahweh has helped.” **The Hebrew Bible has the same title.** The purpose of this genealogy was not to record all of Ezra’s ancestors but to trace his lineage from Aaron. Tom Constable ¹

Jewish tradition has a great deal to say about Ezra. It claims that he established the system of synagogue worship while in Babylon, that he played an important part in the formation of the Old Testament canon, and compiled the books of **Chronicles, Nehemiah and Esther...in Jewish tradition he is regarded as a second Moses.** Peter Williams ²

***3a Ezra 7** ⁶ **This Ezra was a scribe who was well versed** (“skilled”/“rapid”) **in the Law of Moses**, which YaHWeH, the God of Israel, had given to the people of Israel. He came up to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the king gave him everything he asked for, because **the gracious hand of YaHWeH his God was on him.** ⁷ Some of the people of Israel, as well as some of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and Temple servants, traveled up to Jerusalem with him **in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes’ reign.**

A “scribe” was a person who functioned as a copier, writer, and communicator. In the Gospels we have many references to scribes. In Jesus’ day they were primarily students and teachers of the law. In Ezra’s time this specialized function of the scribe was developing. **Ezra himself as a scribe and priest was able to teach the law.** Tom Constable

***4 Ezra 7** ⁸ Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in August of that year. ⁹ He had arranged to leave Babylon on April 8, the first day of the new year (**Jewish calendar**), and he arrived at Jerusalem on August 4, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. **[900 miles in 4 months]** ¹⁰ This was because **Ezra had determined** (Lit. “For Ezra had set his heart”) **to study and obey the Law of**

¹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Ch 36:22.

² Peter Williams, [Opening up Ezra](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 77.

YaHWeH and to teach those decrees and regulations to the people of Israel.

Here we see what kind of man Ezra was. A Levite from the priestly family of Aaron and a man who set his heart on God's Word.

****Study/Obey/Teach:**

***4a** “The order is very significant, for you cannot effectively practice what you have not thoroughly learned, and you cannot convincingly teach what you have not practically applied.” Laney

This has always been the heart that God has looked for in His servants. He's looking for those who would set their hearts on God's Word.

***5 Study:** What does this say to us about the time we are prepared to give to the reading and study of God's Word? Is the Bible precious to us? Do we read it in such a way as to allow it to sift and search our hearts, and to illuminate our minds with its mighty truths? **Far too many Christians are content simply to read a few verses of the Bible whenever the fancy takes them.** But that is not good enough if we are to feed our souls and minds on God's Word. It is when we seriously search the Scriptures, with a desire to learn and understand, that the Holy Spirit comes to our aid. Peter Williams

Paul told Timothy to look for people who would be willing to give themselves to the study and teaching of God's Word – he called these type of people; “Faithful” who would give themselves to be learners of God's Word. ***6 2 Timothy 2:1–2 (NASB95)** ¹ You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**

We have been offering to teach you; with various study tools. One of those is the Inductive Bible Study. The IBS course you can get in the book store is life-changing as far as Bible study goes! You learn to rightly divide the Word: What does it say? What does it mean? How do I respond? Two Women's Bible Studies will be starting soon: James (in June) and Self-Confrontation (in September).

And this is exactly the main point; to obey God's Word! This is what Ezra set his heart to do!

***6a James 1:22–25 (NIV84)** ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

***7 Obey:** There are Christians who like to spend all their time talking about the Bible, and discussing the finer points of doctrine, but who never actually begin to live it. And let us face it: in the end, **living the life is what a large part of the gospel is all about.** People must see

that we live a different set of values and standards. So if the Word of God is to do its work in the hearts and minds of men and women, **there must come a point where we stop verbalizing and pontificating about it, and start applying it.** Peter Williams

Teach: Because he studied and obeyed, Ezra was qualified to be used by the Holy Spirit to teach!

***8 Nehemiah 8:1–3 (NIV84)** ¹ all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. **They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which YaHWeH had commanded for Israel.** ² So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³ **He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.**

***8a 2 Timothy 2 (NIV84)** ¹⁴ **Keep reminding them of these things.** Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ **Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.**

***9** “Though the direct distance between Babylon and Jerusalem is about five hundred miles, the travelers would have had to traverse nine hundred miles, going northwest along the Euphrates River and then south.” Edwin Yamauchi

Ezra 7 ¹¹ King Artaxerxes had given a copy of the following letter to Ezra, the priest and scribe who studied and taught the commands and decrees of YaHWeH to Israel:

READ: ¹² “From Artaxerxes, the king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the teacher of the law of **the God of heaven.** Greetings. ¹³ “I decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, including the priests and Levites, may volunteer to return to Jerusalem with you. ¹⁴ I and my council of seven hereby instruct you to conduct an inquiry into the situation in Judah and Jerusalem, based on your God’s law, which is in your hand. ¹⁵ We also commission you to take with you silver and gold, which we are freely presenting as an offering to **the God of Israel** who lives in Jerusalem. ¹⁶ “Furthermore, you are to take any silver and gold that you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the voluntary offerings of the people and the priests that are presented for the Temple of their **God in Jerusalem.** ¹⁷ These donations are to be used specifically for the purchase of bulls, rams, male lambs, and the appropriate grain offerings and liquid offerings, all of which will be offered on the altar of the Temple of your God in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ Any silver and gold that is left over may be used in whatever way you and your colleagues feel is the will of your God. ¹⁹ “But as for the cups we are entrusting to you for the service of the Temple of your God, deliver them all to **the God of Jerusalem.** ²⁰ If you need anything else for your God’s Temple or for any similar needs, you may take it from the royal treasury.

***10** ²¹ “I, Artaxerxes the king, hereby send this decree to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: ‘You are to give Ezra, the priest and teacher of the law of **the God of heaven,** whatever he requests of you. ²² You are to give him up to 7,500 pounds of

silver, 500 bushels of wheat, 550 gallons of wine, 550 gallons of olive oil, and an unlimited supply of salt. ²³ Be careful to provide whatever **the God of heaven** demands for the temple of **the God of heaven, for why should we risk bringing God's anger against the realm of the king and his sons?** ²⁴ I also decree that no priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, Temple servant, or other worker in this Temple of God will be required to pay tribute, customs, or tolls of any kind.'

"*The vessels* may have been some which had been overlooked when the captured vessels were restored by Cyrus (1:7ff), but it is just as likely that they were a goodwill gift, newly presented." Derek Kidner

***11 It is significant, I feel, that Artaxerxes in his letter uses the expression, 'the God of heaven' four times (7:12, 21 and 23).** Remember this is a pagan king! We might have expected him to use an expression like 'the God of the Jews'. But to speak of the God of heaven suggests that the king had some notion, however vague, of a divine being and power who ruled over the destinies of men and nations, and who was infinitely greater than any of his own Babylonian deities. Peter Williams

"A 'talent' in the Babylonian sexagesimal system was 60 minas, with a mina being 60 shekels. A talent weighed about 75 pounds. A hundred talents was an enormous sum, about 3¾ tons of silver. This amount, together with a talent of gold, was the tribute that Pharaoh Neco imposed on Judah (2 Kings 23:33)." (Yamauchi)

***12 Ezra 7 ²⁵ "And you, Ezra, are to use the wisdom your God has given you to appoint magistrates and judges who know your God's laws to govern all the people in the province west of the Euphrates River. Teach the law to anyone who does not know it. ²⁶ Anyone who refuses to obey the law of your God and the law of the king will be punished immediately, either by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."**

It is interesting that a Persian king would make the study of God's Word mandatory! But then he had a fear of YaHWeH, and believed that he and his sons were going to be blessed by God for his sending Ezra to Jerusalem.

So he gave Ezra authority as the spiritual leader of the expedition as well as the governmental leadership of Jerusalem and Judea. Ezra would operate in the king's authority in both the spiritual and secular realms!

Ezra 7 ²⁷ Praise YaHWeH, the God of our ancestors, who made the king want to beautify the Temple of YaHWeH in Jerusalem! ²⁸ And praise him for demonstrating such unflinching love to me by honoring me before the king, his council, and all his mighty nobles! I felt encouraged because the gracious hand of YaHWeH my God was on me. And I gathered some of the leaders of Israel to return with me to Jerusalem.

The words of this praise interlude are in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew continues through the end of the book. James Smith ³

***12a Proverbs 21:1 (NLT)** ¹ The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by YaHWeH; He guides it wherever He pleases.

***13 Ezra 8** ¹ Here is a list of the family leaders and the genealogies of those who came with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

***13a A comparison of verses 3–14 with 2:3–15 shows that Ezra's companions were mainly the relatives of those Jews who had returned 80 years earlier under Sheshbazzar. The one exception was Joab's family (v. 9).** Tom Constable

Ezra 8 ² From the family of Phinehas: Gershom. From the family of Ithamar: Daniel. From the family of David: Hattush, ³ a descendant of Shecaniah. From the family of Parosh: Zechariah and 150 other men were registered. ⁴ From the family of Pahath-moab: Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah and 200 other men. ⁵ From the family of Zattu: Shecaniah son of Jahaziel and 300 other men. ⁶ From the family of Adin: Ebed son of Jonathan and 50 other men. ⁷ From the family of Elam: Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah and 70 other men. ⁸ From the family of Shephatiah: Zebadiah son of Michael and 80 other men. ⁹ From the family of Joab: Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men. ¹⁰ From the family of Bani: Shelomith son of Josiphiah and 160 other men. ¹¹ From the family of Bebai: Zechariah son of Bebai and 28 other men. ¹² From the family of Azgad: Johanan son of Hakkatan and 110 other men. ¹³ From the family of Adonikam, who came later: Eliphelet, Jeuel, Shemaiah, and 60 other men. ¹⁴ From the family of Bigvai: Uthai, Zaccur, and 70 other men.

***13b** Adding the counts of the male members of the group together, there was a total count of at least 1,496 men in the group. Adding an estimated number of women and children (Ezra 8:21), we can surmise that the total number of the party coming with Ezra in the days of **King Artaxerxes** was something like between 6,000 to 7,000 people. David Guzik

***14 Ezra 8** ¹⁵ I assembled the exiles at the Ahava Canal, and we camped there for three days while I went over the lists of the people and the priests who had arrived. **I found that not one Levite had volunteered to come along.** ¹⁶ So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders of the people. I also sent for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were **men of discernment.** ¹⁷ I sent them to Iddo, the leader of the Levites at Casiphia, to ask him and his relatives and the Temple servants to send us ministers for the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

***15a** The Levites were different from the priests, being the larger tribe from which the family of priests (the descendants of Aaron). These were the essential workers for the system of temple

³ James E. Smith, [*The Books of History*](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), Ezr 7:27–28.

worship that Ezra was to promote. Perhaps the Levites were generally too comfortable with their lives in Babylon to go back to Jerusalem. Perhaps they were not willing to come back to their ancestral temple duties that put them under the authority of the priests. **Whatever the reason was, Ezra had the money and the authority he needed, but not the men.** David Guzik

Ezra's progress back to Jerusalem was halted while he waited to recruit Levites. God had called these men to a special service, and yet few were willing to volunteer when their services were needed. ***15a** God has gifted each of us with abilities so we can make a contribution to his kingdom work. **Don't wait to be recruited, but look for opportunities to volunteer. Don't hinder God's work by holding back.** "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another". Life Application Bible

***15b** **1 Peter 4:10 (NIV84)** ¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (**Romans 12:4–8**)

Ezra 8 ¹⁸ Since the gracious hand of our God was on us, they sent us a man named Sherebiah, along with eighteen of his sons and brothers. He was a very astute man and a descendant of Mahli, who was a descendant of Levi son of Israel. ¹⁹ They also sent Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, and twenty of his sons and brothers, ²⁰ and 220 Temple servants. The Temple servants were assistants to the Levites—a group of Temple workers first instituted by King David and his officials. They were all listed by name.

16 Ezra 8** ²¹ And there by the Ahava Canal, ***I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that He would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled. ²² For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. **After all, we had told the king, "Our God's hand of protection is on all who worship Him, but His fierce anger rages against those who abandon Him."**

***17** Verse 21 was the text of John Robinson's last sermon at Leiden before the Pilgrims sailed for the New World in 1620. R. A. Bowman

***18 Ezra 8** ²³ **So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and He heard our prayer.**

***18a** Fasting humbled them because going without food was a reminder of their complete dependence on God. Fasting also gave them more time to pray and meditate on God. Too often we pray glibly and superficially. Serious prayer, by contrast, requires concentration. It puts us in touch with God's will and can really change us. Without serious prayer, **we reduce God to a quick-service pharmacist with painkillers for our every ailment.** Life Application Bible

They needed protection because the danger was real. There was a constant threat of robbers and bandits, especially because they were transporting so many valuables. Yet because of their dependence on God (expressed through prayer and fasting), God protected them. David Guzik

Later Nehemiah will accept a military escort. But Ezra feels in his heart that it would undermine God's reputation to ask for soldiers to go with them. Ezra was honoring his testimony and the power of YaHWeH to this pagan king!

Ezra 8 ²⁴ **I appointed twelve leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten other priests—²⁵ to be in charge of transporting** the silver, the gold, the gold bowls, and the other items that the king, his council, his officials, and all the people of Israel had presented for the Temple of God. ²⁶ I weighed the treasure as I gave it to them and found the totals to be as follows: 24 tons of silver, 7,500 pounds of silver articles, 7,500 pounds of gold, ²⁷ 20 gold bowls, equal in value to 1,000 gold coins, 2 fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold. ²⁸ And I said to these priests, "You and these treasures have been set apart as holy to YaHWeH. This silver and gold is a voluntary offering to YaHWeH, the God of our ancestors. ***19** ²⁹ **Guard these treasures well until you present them to the leading priests, the Levites, and the leaders of Israel, who will weigh them at the storerooms of YaHWeH's Temple in Jerusalem."** ³⁰ **So the priests and the Levites accepted the task of transporting these treasures of silver and gold to the Temple of our God in Jerusalem.**

****"Best to be squeaky clean with finances!"**

***19a** "These are enormous sums, worth millions of dollars." (Yamauchi) The king of Persia sent great treasure to support the ongoing work of the temple.

***19b Ezra 8** ³¹ We broke camp at the Ahava Canal on April 19 and started off to Jerusalem. **And the gracious hand of our God protected us and saved us from enemies and bandits along the way.** ³² So we arrived safely in Jerusalem, where we rested for three days. ³³ On the fourth day after our arrival, the silver, gold, and other valuables were weighed at the Temple of our God and entrusted to Meremoth son of Uriah the priest and to Eleazar son of Phinehas, along with Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui—both of whom were Levites.

"God never fails those who act in full dependence on Himself, and so in complete independence of all others." G. Campbell Morgan

Ezra 8 ³⁴ Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the total weight was officially recorded. ³⁵ Then the exiles who had come out of captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel. They presented twelve bulls for all the people of Israel, as well as ninety-six rams and seventy-seven male lambs. They also offered twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was given as a burnt offering to YaHWeH. ³⁶ The king's decrees were delivered to his highest officers and the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, who then cooperated by supporting the people and the Temple of God.

“According to Babylonian tradition, almost every transaction, including sales and marriages, had to be recorded in writing. Ezra may have had to send back a signed certification of the delivery of the treasures.” Edwin Yamauchi

“Presumably the documents that accredited Ezra as one who was authorized to administer the Jewish law among his fellow-countrymen in the various regions of the province.” Derek Kidner

THE MORAL MESS THAT EZRA WAS PRESENTED WITH:

***20 Ezra 9** ¹ When these things had been done, the Jewish leaders came to me and said, **“Many of the people of Israel, and even some of the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the other peoples living in the land.** They have taken up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

What was the corruption of the land? According to Leviticus 18:6-23 the Canaanite people had defiled the land with their aggressive, deviant, and open sexual immorality including incest and homosexuality. These are the practices that brought God’s wrath and judgment on Israel before the captivity. It was all the sins that got them into captivity in the first place!

***20a Ezekiel 9:4 NLT** He said to him, “Walk through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of **all who weep and sigh because of the detestable sins being committed in their city.**”

Unfortunately, we are living in a modern culture which is not so modern in its sin! The same detestable sins are smothering our nation. So, you’re in good company if you are “weeping and sighing because of all the detestable sins being committed in our city and our country.

***21** This is the stuff on the news nowadays! There was an inclusive headline this week on Fox which sums up our wicked culture: **“Transgender sex offender sues prison for right to practice witchcraft”** <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/26/north-carolina-transgender-inmate-suing-prison-over-right-to-practice-witchcraft.html>

First, evil people (Rom. 1:18-32) are intentionally creating sexual confusion in our culture in rebellion to how God made them.

Second, we have become a nation of sexual perverts – praying on women and children.

Third, we have a prison crisis and don’t have enough prisons to hold the law-breakers.

Fourth, our court system is a shambles and over taxed with frivolous suits.

Fifth, people believe they have a right to have whatever they want.

Sixth, we have forgotten the God who blessed this nation.

There it is, 21st century American culture in a nutshell. But then Paul already told us exactly what it would be like:

***21b** 2 Timothy 3:1–5 (NIV84) ¹ But mark this: **There will be terrible times in the last days.** ² **People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money,** boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, **not lovers of the good,** ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**

***22** Ezra 9 ² **For the men of Israel have married women from these people and have taken them as wives for their sons. So the holy race (Lit. “seed”) has become polluted by these mixed marriages. Worse yet, the leaders and officials have led the way in this outrage.”**

“During the obscure period that followed the dedication of the temple – a period of which we have no historical remains – the rigorous exclusiveness which had marked the conduct of the returned exiles when they rudely rejected the proposal of their Gentile neighbors to assist them in rebuilding the temple was abandoned, and freedom of intercourse went so far as to permit intermarriage with the descendants of the Canaanites.” Walter Adeney

***22a** Ezra 9 ³ When I heard this, I tore my cloak and my shirt, pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat down **utterly shocked.** ⁴ Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel came and sat with me because of this outrage committed by the returned exiles. **And I sat there utterly appalled until the time of the evening sacrifice.**

“Utterly shocked” “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.’)” Edwin Yamauchi

Ezra knew all this from studying God’s Word, and that’s why he is so appalled and distraught at what the Israelites had done in marrying heathen women, which was prohibited in God’s law: **Exodus 34:11-16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-4.** He knew that women can have a great influence on their men, even leading them to accept and embrace their sick behavior – at the very least compromising their zeal and devotion to the one true God.

Why the “off the charts” reaction? Was just because that they were engaging in the same abominable practices that got them carted off to Babylon in the first place? **Yes; in part, but there is a deeper issue here.** In the other translations we see that what they say to Ezra is that the “Holy seed” will be mixed.

Ezra 9:2 (NKJV) ² For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, **so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands.** Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

This means much more than just that the nation of Israel will be a country with other people living in it too. It means that the “seed” – the bloodline of the nation

would be corrupt and that the bloodline of the Messiah who was to come would be “tainted” or ruined.

***23 Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)** ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, **And between your seed and her Seed**; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

Remember Satan, the Adversary, was out to kill the Messiah from the Garden of Eden. He used many methods to destroy the seed of Israel (Pharaoh, Herod) and later to kill Jesus, but one method was to see that Jesus was never born! By polluting the lineage of Jesus with foreign, pagan worshipping women he was attempting to destroy the “Seed”.

***23a Genesis 22:15–19 (NKJV)** ¹⁵ Then the Angel of YaHWeH called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶ and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says YaHWeH, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*—¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.**” ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba. (**Genesis 21:12–13, Psalm 105:6, Acts 3:25**)

***23b If you look at the books Ezra is credited with writing and you read through them, first you see lots of genealogies (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah).** There are numerous written records of who begat who many of them all the way back to Jacob’s family! Even into the NT in the Gospels you see these bloodlines recorded to show the pure lineage from Abraham to Jesus!

Ezra was intent (by the Holy Spirit) on keeping the blood line of Israel and hence Abraham straight. **The reason is that Ezra understood that the promise of God to Abraham was to be fulfilled. He understood the importance of the seed! Ezra’s calling was to preserve the records of bloodline, the Word of God and the purity of the people of God in order to protect the “seed” of Abraham; hence, his reaction!**

What did he do about it? First, PRAY!

***24 Ezra 9** ⁵ At the time of the sacrifice, I stood up from where I had sat in mourning with my clothes torn. I fell to my knees and lifted my hands to YaHWeH my God. ⁶ **I prayed,**

The priests presented the evening offering between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. in Jesus’ day. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Service*,

If you find yourself just sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people and happenings in our culture ... to the point where it really “torments your soul”, you are in good company with Ezra and Lot! **But what to do about it? PRAY!** And seek the Lord’s face as to how you can best be an influence for good, advancing God’s Kingdom in your small sphere of influence.

This was the most common posture of prayer in the Old Testament. Many modern people close their eyes, bow their head, 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.** “With the palms open toward heaven, in a having, craving way, as beggars. This was the Jewish manner of praying, and it was very becoming.” (Trapp)

Ezra’s Prayer:

Ezra 9 “O my God, I am utterly ashamed (lit. “Ashamed and humiliated”); I blush to lift up my face to You. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our ancestors until now, we have been steeped in sin. That is why we and our kings and our priests have been at the mercy of the pagan kings of the land. We have been killed, captured, robbed, and disgraced, just as we are today.

Ashamed and humiliated: According to Dr. Yamauchi, there is a difference in these two ancient Hebrew words. **The first speaks of being ashamed; the second of “the pain that accompanies shame.”**

***24a Ezra 9** ⁸ “**But now we have been given a brief moment of grace, for YaHWeH our God has allowed a few of us to survive as a remnant. He has given us security in this holy place.** Our God has brightened our eyes and granted us some relief from our slavery. ⁹ For we were slaves, but in His unfailing love our God did not abandon us in our slavery. Instead, He caused the kings of Persia to treat us favorably. He revived us so we could rebuild the Temple of our God and repair its ruins. He has given us a protective wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

Vs 8 “But now for a brief moment grace has been *shown* from YaHWeH our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and **to give us a peg (“place”) in His holy place**, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. (NASB95)

Second, Ezra acknowledged the grace of God. A remnant had escaped exile to return to the Promised Land. A common explanation is that the term “*tent peg*” might be equivalent to the modern expression “foothold.” Fensham (*op. cit.*, p. 129) comments: “This is language from nomadic life, and it refers to a place reached after a long journey where a tent may be pitched.” James Smith

“The Jewish commentator Slotki (p. 166) observes poignantly: ‘**A little grace had been granted by God to His people; a small remnant had found its weary way back to its home and driven a single peg into its soil; a solitary ray of light was shining; a faint breath of freedom lightened their slavery. How graphically Ezra epitomizes Jewish experience in these few words!**’” Edwin Yamauchi

***25 Ezra 9** ¹⁰ “And now, O our God, what can we say after all of this? For once again we have abandoned your commands! ¹¹ Your servants the prophets warned us when they said, ‘**The land you are entering to possess is totally defiled by the detestable practices of the people**

living there. From one end to the other, the land is filled with corruption. ¹² Don't let your daughters marry their sons! Don't take their daughters as wives for your sons. Don't ever promote the peace and prosperity of those nations. If you follow these instructions, you will be strong and will enjoy the good things the land produces, and you will leave this prosperity to your children forever.'

The implication here (clearly stated in other passages) is that if they intermingled with the heathen they would lose the land. That, of course, is exactly what had happened in 586 B.C. James Smith

“Although you may fancy that this way of making leagues and marriages with them is the only way to establish and settle you, yet I assure you it will weaken and ruin you and the contrary course will make you stronger.” (Poole)

Ezra 9 ¹³ “Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. **But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve, for you, our God, have allowed some of us to survive as a remnant.** ¹⁴ But even so, we are again breaking your commands and intermarrying with people who do these detestable things. Won't your anger be enough to destroy us, so that even this little remnant no longer survives?
***26** ¹⁵ O YAHWEH, God of Israel, you are just. **We come before you in our guilt as nothing but an escaped remnant, though in such a condition none of us can stand in your presence.”**

***26a** None of us are worthy to stand before God and answer for our sin. We are guilty and in need of God's salvation in Christ Jesus, the One who saves us from the wrath to come. **Romans 3:23–24 (NASB95)** ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

***26b Acts 4:12 (NLT)** ¹² There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

***27 Ezra 10** ¹ While Ezra prayed and made this confession, weeping and lying face down on the ground in front of the Temple of God, a very large crowd of people from Israel—men, women, and children—gathered and wept bitterly with him. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, a descendant of Elam, said to Ezra, **“We have been unfaithful to our God, for we have married these pagan women of the land. But in spite of this there is hope for Israel.** ³ Let us now make a covenant with our God to divorce our pagan wives and to **send them away with their children.** We will follow the advice given by you and by the others who respect the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law of God. ⁴ Get up, for it is your duty to tell us how to proceed in setting things straight. We are behind you, so be strong and take action.”

Notice all Ezra is doing is praying and confessing their sin before God.

The Holy Spirit convicts the people of Israel that they have sinned and that something needs to be done to get back on the right track with the Lord.

This is repentance – changing direction. Moving toward God instead of away from Him. It starts with confession. **J. Edwin Orr reminds us that this is one of the signs of the Holy Spirit moving to revive our hearts!**

***28** “Confession of sins is a neglected doctrine. It only comes into its rightful place in times of revival, when the Holy Spirit comes in doubly-convicting power and makes it impossible for the erring believer to have any peace of mind until the wrong is confessed whenever necessary.” J. Edwin Orr (Expert on modern “Revivals”)

***28a** **1 John 1:8–9 (NIV84)** ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

***29** *Repentance is not just being sorry. People can sometimes think they have repented when in fact they have not actually done so. They feel sorry for what they have said or done, and think that is sufficient. But it is not. We can feel sorry and ashamed because of something we have said or done, but without any reference to God whatsoever. True biblical repentance, on the other hand, will always involve the recognition that our sin is sin against the holiness of God, and that is what makes it so serious. True repentance will always involve a change of mind and attitude, and a change in the direction of one’s life and behavior. This is necessary as an evidence that the repentance is genuine.* Peter Williams

***30** **Ezra 10** ⁵ **So Ezra stood up and demanded that the leaders of the priests and the Levites and all the people of Israel swear that they would do as Shecaniah had said.** And they all swore a solemn oath. ⁶ Then Ezra left the front of the Temple of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. He spent the night there without eating or drinking anything. He was still in mourning because of the unfaithfulness of the returned exiles. ⁷ Then a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles should come to Jerusalem. ⁸ Those who failed to come within three days would, if the leaders and elders so decided, forfeit all their property and be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

Shecaniah both exhorted those guilty to do what was right and stood beside them in support. **This was especially meaningful because it seems that though Shecaniah was not guilty of marrying a pagan woman, both his father and his uncles were (Ezra 10:21).** David Guzik

Ezra 10 ⁹ Within three days, all the people of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. This took place on December 19, and all the people were sitting in the square before the Temple of God. **They were trembling both because of the seriousness of the matter and because it was raining.**

***30a** It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain'. **What a picture of absolute misery!** The ninth month (Chislev) is our December and was the beginning of the rainy season. **The people are cold, wet and trembling because of the distress their sin and disobedience had brought upon them.** Peter Williams

***31 Ezra 10** ¹⁰ Then Ezra the priest stood and said to them: "You have committed a terrible sin. By marrying pagan women, you have increased Israel's guilt. ¹¹ So now confess your sin to YahWeH, the God of your ancestors, and do what He demands. **Separate yourselves from the people of the land and from these pagan women."**

Ezra had the civil authority to enforce whatever he wanted in regard to the law of the land both religious and secular! **7:26 Anyone who refuses to obey the law of your God and the law of the king** will be punished immediately, either by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."

Ezra 10 ¹² Then the whole assembly raised their voices and answered, **"Yes, you are right; we must do as you say!"** ¹³ Then they added, "This isn't something that can be done in a day or two, for many of us are involved in this extremely sinful affair. And this is the rainy season, so we cannot stay out here much longer. ¹⁴ Let our leaders act on behalf of us all. **Let everyone who has a pagan wife come at a scheduled time, accompanied by the leaders and judges of his city, so that the fierce anger of our God concerning this affair may be turned away from us."**

Ezra 10 ¹⁵ Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this course of action, and they were supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite. ¹⁶ So this was the plan they followed. Ezra selected leaders to represent their families, designating each of the representatives by name.

***32 Ezra 10 On December 29, the leaders sat down to investigate the matter.**

The fact that it had to be on a case by case basis shows that the families were interviewed! It makes no sense that the provision wasn't made as in the Law of Moses that foreign people could convert to Judaism and be a part of Israel. Examples: Rahab, Ruth etc. Many wives must then have converted. **Numbers 9:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ And if a stranger sojourns among you and would keep the Passover to YahWeH, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its rule, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native."

***32a Ezra 10** ¹⁷ **By March 27, the first day of the new year, they had finished dealing with all the men who had married pagan wives.** ¹⁸

These are the priests who had married pagan wives: From the family of Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and

Gedaliah. ¹⁹ **They vowed to divorce their wives, and they each acknowledged their guilt by offering a ram as a guilt offering.**

***32b** A total of 113 Israelites had married and now divorced their foreign wives, only a fraction of the total number of Jews then living in Judah. Of these, 16 were priests and 10 were Levites, about 25 percent of the total. Tom Constable

“Foreign women were married contrary to the law of God. The marriages were illegal from the outset. The sending away of the women is to guard the exiles against the continuation of an illegal act. With their foreign wives they lived in sin. It is thus clear from v. 4 that there is a strong legal background against which Shecaniah has formulated his proposal. The dividing line between the permissible and impermissible is strongly emphasized. Even the children born from the illegal marriages must be sent away. ***33** **This proposal is harsh in the light of modern Christian conceptions. Why should innocent children be punished?** We must remember that the religious influence of the mothers on their children was regarded as the stumbling block. To keep the religion of the Lord pure was the one and only aim of Ezra and the returned exiles. As a small minority group, the repatriates lived in the Holy Land among a large population of influential people who were followers of various polytheistic religions. Against such larger numbers they had to defend themselves and their religious identity. Thus the drastic measures are understandable.”
Fensham

***33a** This was understood by the ancient culture – that of course, the women would stay with their children. “All these women and their children’ reflects the fact that in ancient societies, as in ours, mothers were given custody of their children when marriages were dissolved.” Dr. Edwin Yamauchi

**When Malachi comes on the scene he will explain that God hates divorce, among His people. But it is not the unpardonable sin and can be forgiven if true repentance and forgiveness is sought! What follows is a list of those who had married foreign wives and whose wife did not commit to Judaism and so was divorced.

Ezra 10 ²⁰ From the family of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. ²¹ From the family of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah. ²² From the family of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasa. ²³ These are the Levites who were guilty: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (also called Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. ²⁴ This is the singer who was guilty: Eliashib. These are the gatekeepers who were guilty: Shallum, Telem, and Uri. ²⁵ These are the other people of Israel who were guilty: From the family of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah, and Benaiah. ²⁶ From the family of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah. ²⁷ From the family of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza. ²⁸ From the family of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. ²⁹ From the family of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth. ³⁰ From the family of Pahath-moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh. ³¹ From the family of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah,

Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³² Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. ³³ From the family of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. ³⁴ From the family of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, ³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi, ³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu. ³⁸ From the family of Binnui: Shimei, ³⁹ Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, ⁴⁰ Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹ Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴² Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. ⁴³ From the family of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. ⁴⁴ **Each of these men had a pagan wife, and some even had children by these wives.**

Ezra here disappears from the Biblical record for about thirteen years, when he appears again in the Book of Nehemiah. His passion then was the same as it was at the end of the Book of Ezra: to transform the people of God by bringing them the Word of God.