

Promise Keeper

Ezra 9:1-15

- Ezra and the people are now in Jerusalem having made the long, hard, four month, nine-hundred-mile trek through the desert, carrying a king's ransom in silver, gold, and temple artifacts, and yet not losing even a single coin on the way. Now for the first time in 140-150 yrs their free to worship The Lord in accordance to His Laws and commands, having seen God honor the words Ezra spoke to King Artaxerxes > **8:22**.

V1-15

- **V1-2** after his arrival and accounting of all the gifts brought from Babylon, you knew at some point that the honeymoon phase of this trip was going to end, and it does as Ezra receives some alarming news of the spiritual condition of the post exile community in Jerusalem. A contamination had occurred as a group of the leaders of the tribes, priests, and Levites, had taken for themselves and their sons, wives from the ungodly pagan people who lived near and around them.
- Not only that, but by doing so they brought in customs and false worship that God had long warned them to stay far away from. **Mal 2:11-16** says it had gotten so bad that some of these men had even divorced their Jewish wives in order to marry heathen women from other nations and tribes.
- In the NT believers are warned not to marry or become entangled in romantic relationships with the unsaved for by doing so you put yourself in danger of becoming sympathetic to false worship, and if you have children with them then it becomes a battle in how they are going to be raised, Christian or being open minded to what others believe, as we have to respect other people's beliefs > **2 Cor 6:14**.
- Every time I read **Ps 1:1-6** it's a reminder that only someone who is not influenced by those who don't know the Lord can fully understand why these verses are so crucial to our walk and fellowship with Jesus. The reason God had brought them back into the land was so they could freely worship Him in accordance to His Word, instead they revert right back to the same sins that caused them to go into captivity in the first place, well you can imagine how hearing this made Ezra feel.

- **V3** rather than preach at the people, he tears his clothes, rips out the hairs from his beard, and sits down in front of the people astonished! This word in the Hebrew means “**to stun**” he was devastated, he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. After all that they have gone through, to hear that those who came back over a hundred and forty yrs ago are now practicing some of the same sins that got them enslaved knocked him off his feet so that he had to sit down for a moment and gather himself.
- **V4** with clothes torn, and patches of hair missing from his beard, Ezra sits silently with others “who trembled at the words of God” for hours until the evening sacrifice. This is how we are to feel toward people who name the name of Christ living sinful lives and making careless choices, that not only affect them but also their children.
- Sadly, we’ve become numb and uncaring to how others who say they love the Lord, are living their lives. These people trembled at the words of God, they quaked, shook, at God’s word, that’s how much respect they had for what God has commanded, and because they honored His word like this just hearing about the sins of their countrymen stunned them.
- When was the last time you were stunned to the point where you sat in silence and meditation to The Lord concerning your brothers and sister’s lifestyle choices? Before you can be stunned like this you first must have an unshakeable respect and honor for God’s word, that no one can give a justifiable excuse to why they disobey it > **Is 66:5**- those who tremble at His Word will be ridiculed by man but exalted by God
- **V5-7** as Ezra is sitting stunned, shocked and appalled by what he has heard, he finally arises from his position of mourning and prays. Like both Nehemiah and Daniel, Ezra identifies himself with the people and their sins, as he speaks to God about “**our iniquities**” and not their iniquities. Israel was a one covenant nation before God and the sins of one person affected all the people, remember Achan.
- Also like the publican in **Lk 18:9-14** notice Ezra was too ashamed to look up to heaven as he prayed, just falling on his knees, as he spreads out his hands, holding his head down, as he prays. **Jer 8:12** Israel had gotten to the point where sin didn’t bring shame anymore, and look at our nation, we’ve turned sin into entertainment, causing us to laugh at what ought to make us weep, for there is no shame.

- **V8-9** Ezra uses five different images to remind the people of God's grace upon the people, blessings that he knows they don't deserve. **1.** In His grace God preserved a remnant, **2.** In His grace God brought stability- a peg or nail in the wall, **3.** In His grace God had opened their eyes to their true spiritual state, **4.** In His grace God had delivered them out of bondage, **5.** In His grace God had allowed them to return and rebuild the temple for worship. How do we reward The Lord for all these blessings?
- **V10-11** by forsaking His commandments, in this prayer from a broken hearted man of God, we see neither pride or empty promises to do better, just confession of sin, thankfulness for provision, and acknowledgement of undeserved mercy, in other words no excuses are being made here, just truth.
- **V12-15** Ezra then tells them not to give their children over to pagan nations as wives or take their sons and daughters in marriage so that the land and the inheritances can stay pure and not become defiled. He reminds them what God can do in destroying them, but also what God wanted to do in blessing them.
- This is not a long prayer but as Charles Spurgeon said **"it's the strength of our prayers not the length of our prayers that's important"**. When you pray with a burdened heart, and a mind that's filled with God's Word, then God will incline his ear, and direct your path, Amen!