

Turn in your Bible tonight to Ezra Chapter 9 and we will be going through the whole chapter this evening. So, where are we? Ezra has returned with the 2nd wave of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. For the past 3 weeks we saw the character of Ezra, in that he loved the word of God. In Chapter 7 verse 10 it said this about Ezra.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Ezra had determined in his heart that he was going to make the study of, the living of and the teaching of God's Word a priority in his life. Of course, we know the main reason that Ezra was going back to Jerusalem was that God had commissioned him to go back and to teach the Israelite's the law of God!

We also saw how the hand of God was on Ezra in that he used a pagan king, Artaxerxes, to allow them to go back. And we saw the protection by God as this group of exiles journeyed back to Jerusalem with all the resources they went back with.

But have you ever been going somewhere or anticipating something, whether it was a vacation or just a day trip, maybe a dinner at supposedly a great restaurant, a movie, maybe a conference and you had all these high expectations! But when you got to your destination or whatever you were getting ready to experience it just wasn't the way you thought it would be?

This is just me, but I have to think that Ezra and probably many that were coming to Jerusalem had to be really excited! We are going home, and it is going to be great!! What we are going to find out is that it wasn't all that they were hoping for. At least for Ezra it wasn't! Ezra Chapter 9 and let's read just verses 1 and 2.

Ezra 2:1-2

¹After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ²For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost."

Now some of you may be saying what is the big deal about them taking wives from these other nations. They obviously have fallen in love and want to be married. Well, let's have a little history lesson!

In Genesis 12:1-2, God tells Abraham, at that time Abram this:

Genesis 12:1-2

¹Now, the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing."

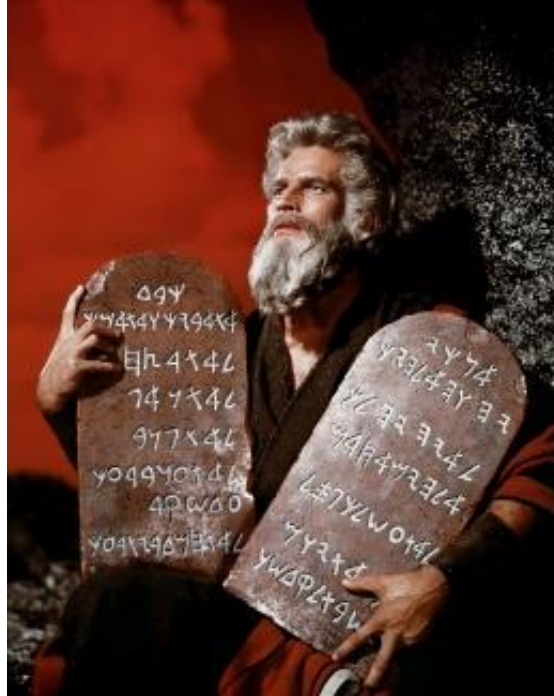
What was that nation? Israel! Let's fast forward! The nation of Israel goes into captivity to what nation? Egypt! The timeline from Abraham to the point of Israel leaving Egypt was 645 years. God uses Moses to have them freed from their captivity in Egypt to go back into the land of Canaan. Why?

This is what God tells Moses and Moses tells the Israelites:

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

How did they know how to be, this holy people, who God has called out to be a witness to all the other nations of God's Holiness, Power, Love, Mercy, and Justice? It all began with this!



Charlton Heston! No, Moses! God gave Moses the law to give to the Israelites so they would know how to live. But also, so they could know him personally by being faithful and obedient to the truth of his Word. Within the law was this command to the Israelites! ***Turn to Exodus 34:11-16***

Exodus 34:11-16

¹¹ “Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ¹² Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. ¹³ You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ¹⁵ lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶ and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

It was the disobedience to this command, beginning with Solomon, that began this downward slide that brought Israel to have God judge them and led to their captivity. Because they did exactly what the command warned them of. As they intermarried, they started following the other false gods. And we continue to see the consequences of their sin.

But you may say, Dale that was 1000 years between the time they received the law, and the time Ezra went back to Jerusalem. Surely times have changed!!

Does God's Word change? Can God's Word be re-interpreted to fit the culture? No! It is timeless! It is TRUTH for all people, for all times, for all situations that speak to Creation, Salvation, and all aspects of life!

Does this command apply to us today? No, of course not! Within the law given to Israel, you had what was called the Ceremonial Law. Laws which were given to Israel specifically. Like not eating shellfish, wearing clothing sown together in just one piece. Sowing a field with one type of seed. Then you had the Moral Law which applies to all people for all time. But what I want to show you briefly is again how we study the Bible and if God says something is good then it is good throughout Scripture. If it is sin, then it is sin throughout Scripture.

In Genesis 1 when God brought Eve to Adam, God established the Covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. That definition of Marriage is pulled through all of Scripture. It is within the law given to the Israelites and it extends to even Jesus saying these words about Marriage.

Matthew 19-4-6

⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Then that string is pulled through the rest of the New Testament that shows us how we are to live up to the point of marriage and beyond. Two verses that show us that are these.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

We are to be sexually pure. There is to be no sexual contact outside the bonds of marriage.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

We are not to marry unbelievers! That is the whole basis behind the command that God gave the Israelites. Purity, Holiness and if you disobey it will pull you down. One way to prevent that young man and young woman. If you feel there is someone you might want to get to know a little better. First thing Mom and Dad is are they a believer and along with that find out what they believe about God's Word. If they are not and if they do not believe this God's divinely inspired Word and it is truth! Run! Run Forest Run!

So, Ezra heard about the sin of the people of Israel! What was his reaction? Look at verses 3 to 7.

Ezra 9:3-7

³ As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled. ⁴ Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the

returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. ⁵ And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, ⁶ saying: “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for 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, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.

At the hearing of the sin of the people Ezra tore his clothes and pulled out or plucked out hair from his head and his beard. During this time this was an expression of heart wrenching grief or brokenness that was displayed at hearing of a loved one’s death but also an expression of complete brokenness over a person’s or a group of people’s sins.

That is synonymous to the beginning of our salvation! In 2 Corinthians 7:10

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

The staff is reading a book by J. Oswald Sanders called Spiritual Maturity. Mr. Sanders is one of those old dead guys we need to read that Pastor Kevin mentioned during the Saturday night service. He wrote this book in 1962. In Chapter 2 he speaks to the “The Prostrating Vision of God!” He speaks to the response that some of the great men of God had when they were brought into the presence of God. Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, Paul, and John.

How when they were brought into the glory of God, they could do nothing but lay prostrate before him or turn their face away! So, it should be with our repentance. But Mr. Sanders also detailed that God did not leave any of them there and he does not leave us there. Yes! In our realization of his holiness, there is a conviction. But if we truly repent then he reaches down and with the grace of God pulls us up. Go and Sin no More!!!

Listen to these words from Mr. Sanders:

True, the vision of God inevitably leads to self-revelation, but always with beneficent end in view. God does not aim merely to humiliate us. There is no need to fear being brought to an end of ourselves “the end of self is the beginning of God.” Indeed, we may welcome the vision of God if our deepest desire is to advance in holiness and to be the greatest use to Him. – J. Oswald Sanders

That is where Ezra had gotten! To the end of his self and it brought him to brokenness, and it brought him to sit appalled at what he just heard. This means he was stunned, horrified. I can’t believe this is going on! I can’t believe all God has done and is doing and they are still sinning against God’s Word.

And of course, when we say that we mean against God! Did you catch what it said at the end of verse 2? The leaders were the foremost in all this!! The very one’s that were supposed to be teaching the law were committing the sins against the law.

Look at what happened next! Look at verse 4 again.

Ezra 9:4

⁴ Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra's brokenness and the reason he was broken was beginning to get some attention. And people came and gathered around him! Those that also trembled at God's Word. That had to bring courage to Ezra to know that he was not alone! But that is one of the issues today! People do not fear God and they do not tremble at his Word. We want to manipulate his word and shape it to fit our lifestyles and not submit to it.

It depicts that mindset as faithlessness. To not obey God's Word is a sign of faithlessness. Because it is showing God that you don't trust his character! You don't trust the truth of God's Word and that is disobedience and shows a lack of or no faith in the Lord. God's Word always points us to a life of Holiness!

In the write up for tonight on Facebook, I mentioned about how Ezra now is going to have address this sin. I asked how, do you and I address our sin. Or do we address our sin at all! We see in verses 5 to 7 a good way to start.

Ezra 9:5-7

⁵ And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, ⁶ saying: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for 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, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.

Can I just show you how that looks? O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, our iniquities! I like the way Ezra included him in this prayer! This confession, this repentance to God! Real repentance brings God's mercy. But I also want to point out where he was at this time. The first time it insinuates that he just sat down when he heard about the sin.

This time, Ezra says, at the evening sacrifice, I rose. Showing us, he went somewhere. Where did you go? He picked up his clothes that he had torn, and he went to the Temple. He went to Church! I know we can call out to God anytime. But there is something about coming together with a brothers and sisters in Christ and worshipping together. As it pertains to worship listen to this from Psalm 24.

³ Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ⁵ He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Whose worship is acceptable unto God? Who can come before God? Those that come through Jesus and the blood that he shed. We do not come on our own merits but through the one who is perfect! Then we can see the mercy of God. Verse 8 and verse 9 read.

Ezra 9:8-9

⁸ But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery. ⁹ For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

Do you see the mercy of God here? For this moment, for this instance of time, God has brought this remnant back to Jerusalem again show his power, his glory. God will judge but desires to show mercy! But we must call out to him.

Look at the screens:

Psalm 86:5

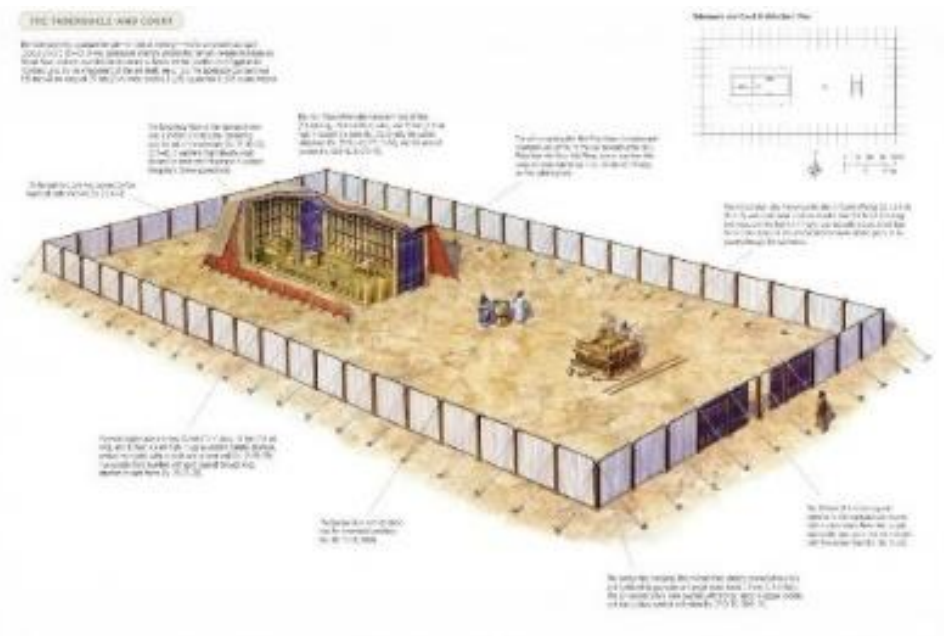
For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

The words steadfast love, in the Hebrew, is actually the word for mercy. So, God, abounding in mercy to all who call upon him. Have you called upon the Lord to receive his mercy? Have you repented and turned to the one that can save? I beg you, call out to him!

But God has brought this remnant back into Jerusalem. Which is considered the Holy City, His Holy Place. Why? The temple is there. Just as with the Tabernacle, and now within the Temple was the Holy of Holies and this represented God's Presence among the people of Israel.

As we think on the remnant once again. God always will have a remnant of the faithful that are completely devoted to him. Surrendered and obedient to his word. There is always a purpose in how this remnant is used. In verse 8, with what we read, this remnant was brought back to Jerusalem to be a secure hold. A secure hold for what and how does that look?

The whole purpose for the Israelites to come out of captivity, is God is reestablishing the nation of Israel to be the light of the Gospel. Through Israel he would once again show his Glory, Power, Mercy and Justice. The words "secure hold" gives the Israelites a very vivid picture of what is being said. The word secure hold means tent-pin.



Here is a depiction of the Tabernacle and you see the ropes coming off each pillar that are holding up the curtains, then these ropes are attached to a peg or pin that was driven in the ground to give them stability and security to stand! As you continue to look at that picture, I mentioned the pillars that the ropes were attached to. Through this study it has been mentioned about the use of numbers and how when a certain number is used there is something significant about that number.

There were 60 pillars used to hold up these curtains of the tabernacle. Do you know why they used 60 pillars? This is good! I mean really good! Because God told them to! God laid out the precise dimensions of the tabernacle and the temple for that matter.

And it is in God's Word that God has told mankind how he has precisely laid out his truth of forgiveness for our sins and a life of holiness we are to live in thankfulness and a desire to be obedient and honor him for the sake and glory of Jesus' name!

Remember! It was disobedience to God's Word, that as Ezra just described brought them into slavery, and it is disobedience to God's Word that brings us into slavery to our sin. But even in that: ***Romans 5:8 But God, shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***

Ezra said, "But even in our slavery you did not forsake us!" Because God will never leave us nor forsake us! Hebrews 13:5! Even in our sin God stretches forth with his love and mercy to draw us to repentance and to surrender our lives to him in obedience. We see the effects of God's mercy. Ezra said in those verses that he brought this remnant back, to this Holy Place, to be a secure hold! That God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving.

Those words are meant to show the joy that was brought back to the nation of Israel of being home. God used pagan Kings to protect and bring this remnant back to Jerusalem. For what, I said before and I will say it again, and to be a light of the Gospel. To shine forth the glory of God! Reviving them! Isn't that what we need! Oh, we say it so many times but to see Revival break out within the true church of Jesus!

A people that are broken over sin, a people living obedient to the Word of God so we can live in the joy of our salvation for the sake of the name of Jesus so that others will be saved. The whole focus here again was the authority of God's Word. It is God's Word that is the ultimate authority, and it brings that revival that joy into our lives. Look at the screens and read Psalm 19:7-8 along with me.

Psalm 19:7-8

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

In verses 10 to 15. Ezra is still praying before God and this thought comes across his mind. He has just reflected on God's mercy that he has shown them.

Ezra 9:10-15

¹⁰ "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, ¹¹ which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. ¹² Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.' ¹³ And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, ¹⁴ shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? ¹⁵ O Lord, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this."

What's being said here. Well, in one of those slang sayings. Ezra is saying, "We don't have a leg to stand on!" Meaning, they have no excuse for their sin. They have seen the justice of God in that they were judged for their sin and taken into captivity. But also, have seen the mercy of God as he has brought them out of that bondage. Ezra says are we just going to fall back into that sin again?

Are we going to break your commandments again to the point that you would consume us, which means to be finished with us and no longer extend your mercy to us? Did you see where Ezra said in verse 13, God you have already punished less that we deserve. Ladies and gentlemen, even if you are here tonight and you have never called out to God to save your soul or you truly have God has punished us less than we deserve. What do we deserve? This!



When it comes to addressing our sin, we must get to the point of living out the difference of I am sorry I got caught and brokenness and I want out of this bondage. The cost of our sin that was placed upon Jesus Christ was a price we could not pay and to great a price to come before the Lord flippantly with our life and with our worship. Because what comes into question is or is not Jesus is truly Lord in our lives.

I want to read verse 15 again and then we are done!

15 O Lord, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.

In our sin, in our guilt of our sin, we can not stand before God. But if we will address our sin, seeing we are guilty of that sin, call out to God in repentance through a brokenness of that sin. Then God will extend mercy, grace to us. I have another string. But that grace, that costly grace gives us power to live for Jesus in holiness. And if we get serious about our sin then the joy of our salvation is restored, and revival can begin in our lives and in the life of the church.