

Ezra 10:1-44 – Confession and Repentance

A number of the returned exiles had married foreign wives who still held to their idols. This led to a violation of the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.” If the remnant continued in this way they would have become what Judah was like before the exile. Unlike the time of Jeremiah, during the time of Ezra many returned exiles confessed their sin and repented. They did know how to blush. They had not made their faces harder than rock.

Read Ezra 10:1-6.

In chapter 9, the fact that Ezra prayed at the evening sacrifice implied that he did that at the temple. Verse 1 of chapter 10 confirms that. He made confession, wept and cast himself down before the house of God. Notice that chapter 10 returned to the third person when talking about Ezra. What happened when Ezra prayed and wept before the temple? (10:1)

Who was Shecaniah? What did he have to say about the situation? What suggestion did he make to Ezra? (10:2-3)

In verse 4, what did Shecaniah exhort Ezra to do?

In verse 5, how did Ezra respond to Shecaniah’s suggestion and exhortation? How did the people respond to Ezra?

After the oath was taken, what did Ezra do? (10:6)

Read Ezra 10:7-17.

After the oath was made, what next step was taken to deal with Israel’s sin? What were the consequences if someone did not comply? Who was cited as the authority behind the directives? Some people find it very difficult to confess sin. Some people will confess if they think that confession will relieve them of any consequences. What should always follow confession? (10:7-8)

How did the people respond to the directives? What time of year was it when they assembled in Jerusalem? (10:9)

In verse 10, Ezra succinctly stated the problem. Why had they been gathered in the cold rain?

In verse 11, what was the required response to their sin? In verse 12, how did the people respond to Ezra's message?

What plan was proposed to deal with the sin of marriage to foreign women? What circumstances factored into the plan? Was it a fair and reasonable plan? (10:13-14)

Verse 15 raises more questions than it answers. What did Jonathan and Jahzeiah oppose? Did they oppose dealing with sin or did they oppose the resolution? Did they demand a quicker response to sin? Who did Meshullam and Shabbethi support. Did they support the original plan or did they support the opposition of Jonathan and Jahzeiah. I don't think these questions can be answered definitively from the text.

Verses 16 and 17 reveal that they proceeded with the original plan despite minor objections. How long did it take to examine all the people who married foreign women? Was a marriage to a foreign woman a legitimate marriage according to Old Testament law? I can't help but think of Abraham putting away his son Ishmael along with his mother.

Read Ezra 10:18-19, 44.

You can read Ezra 10:20-43 for homework over the summer. How many people were recorded as having married foreign women? Do you think this was the full number or were these names just highlights of the full list? Do you think there would be this strong reaction if only 2 out of every 1,000 men were guilty of this sin?

What impressed you from the book of Ezra? What did you learn or relearn? One thing that impressed me throughout the book was how God moved people, from kings to servants, to fulfill his plans.