

Ezra 9:1-15 – Trouble in Paradise

In the previous chapter we got a first hand account of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem. God protected the exiles along their journey. The vessels, gold and silver were delivered to the temple in Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes' commissions were delivered to the satraps and governors of the province Beyond the River. The events of chapter 9 occurred four months and a few days after they arrived in Jerusalem. Had the first wave of exiles continued to obey God's commands? NO!

Read Ezra 9:1-5.

What problem was brought to Ezra's attention in verses 1 and 2?

Was this the first time Ezra had been aware of this problem? In verse 1, what does "after these things had been done" refer to? Ezra 10:9 implies that chapter 9 occurred in the 9th month of the year of their arrival in Jerusalem. Since they arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the 5th month, about four months had passed since they arrived in Jerusalem. Why was there a delay in bringing the problem to Ezra's attention?

What scriptures speak of God forbidding Israel from marrying foreign women? See Exodus 34:11-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-4, Deuteronomy 20:17-18. Was this about race or religion? Are there any people named in the line of Jesus, from Jacob on, who were not physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? How does this shed light on the true purpose of the command to not marry foreign women? (9:1-2)

Who was involved in this sin? What group was singled out as being worse than others? (9:1-2)

How did Ezra react to this news about the people's sin? Who supported Ezra in his reaction? (9:3-4)

What did Ezra do after his initial reaction? Contrast Ezra's reaction to sin with how sin is often dealt with today. (9:5)

Read Ezra 9:6-9.

In verse 6, how did Ezra express the seriousness of Israel's sin? In verse 7, what did Ezra acknowledge about the generations of Jews before him as well as the current returned exiles?

In verse 8, what did Ezra say about the significance of their current generation? This highlighted how especially horrible this sin was at this special time.

Despite the fact that the returned exiles were still under the rule of a foreign power, how had God showed his love towards them? (3:9)

Read Ezra 9:10-15.

According to Ezra, what commandments had the returned exiles broken? Was this an exact quotation from one verse or was it a summary of a number of verses of scripture? Note that Ezra confessed generally but he also confessed specific sins. (9:10-12)

How had God punished Israel in the past for their sins? Based on verse 13, did Israel receive the punishment which they deserved?

Previous sin had led to their exile in Babylonia. God, in his grace, had granted a remnant to return to the Promised Land. What jeopardy did their current sin place them in? What might God's punishment be this time? (9:14)

What does verse 15 say about God? What does verse 15 say about the returned exiles?

What are some things that we can learn from Ezra's reaction to sin? What can we learn from Ezra's prayer? We often think of confession of sin as being us confessing our individual sins. Here, Ezra's prayer was about a sin which affected the whole remnant of Israel. Why didn't Ezra have the attitude, "I didn't commit the sin, so it's not my problem"?