

Character Study: Ezra

Part 2 – Ezra Becomes Broken over the People’s Sin

Ezra 8:24-10:44

What’s happening?

- Ezra organized the people and began the nearly 900 mile journey back to Jerusalem. The Lord watched over His people, and after four months, they arrived safely. Once settled, they presented gifts for the Temple and offered sacrifices to God. (8:24-36)
- The time of celebrating their return quickly ended as Ezra got word of a serious problem. The Israelites living there had disobeyed a command of God that prohibited them from marrying foreign women from the surrounding nations (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4). The purpose for this was to keep the Israelites from falling into the idol worship that characterized those nations. (9:1-2)
- Ezra was deeply broken over this news and fell before the Lord in prayer. He confessed the sins of the people, admitting that in light of God’s overwhelming goodness, their sin was inexcusable. All he could do was plead for God’s mercy. (9:3-15)
- As Ezra was praying, people came and confessed their sin and decided it would be best to separate from the women they were not supposed to have married. The people carried out their plan for the sake of national purity and then offered a sacrifice to God. (10:1-44)

What’s God doing?

> God had redeemed His people from exile and delivered them back to their homeland. This was a significant event in Israel’s history, and the people could not have been more thrilled to be home.

> God has never given His approval for divorce, but the people knew God’s desire was for holiness among His people, so they decided to carry out these divorces for the sake of their nation. The purpose was solely to keep God’s chosen nation (Israel) faithful to worshiping Him alone. This passage gives no justification for divorce today.

What’s to learn?

→ It is not a coincidence that Ezra was both a student of God’s Word and a person who understood the seriousness of sin. The two go hand in hand. Knowing God’s Word helps us see things from God’s perspective. Only then will we see sin for what it is and have a heart for holiness.

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