

Ezra 10

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's finish the book of Ezra tonight. Ezra chapter 10. We'll look at the chapter in its entirety.! I probably won't read the last few verses. You'll see why when we get there.
- We will read the very last verse, but there'll be a few that we leave out, but it won't be. It'll have application. You'll understand why we leave them out. But we will be finishing the book of Ezra tonight, and then we're transitioning right into the book of Nehemiah, which if you know your scripture, Jewish scripture is one book, Ezra and Nehemiah.
- So the two really correspond real well with one another, tell one great narrative. Ezra tells us the spiritual side of restoration that is going on within the nation of Israel, because it's not, even though it's a remnant, they still refer to it as the nation of Israel in its entirety.
- It is seen as one body of people coming out of the Babylonian captivity. Nehemiah deals with the political restructuring and reorganization and including the work of Ezra there.
- So Ezra and Nehemiah, some, I will tell you this before we, well, let's pray and then we'll get right into it. Let's pray together. Father, thank you so much for the day you've given us. We thank you for the opportunity we have of gathering.
- [1 : 0 9] What a joy it is to fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. We thank you for the table fellowship we've already been able to enjoy. We thank you for the activity that's going on around our building. For we know this building is but a tool and an instrument to be used for your glory and your righteousness being exalted and displayed to the community you've put us in.
- So, Father, we pray that you be with the children, with the youth, and with the workers that are working with each and every one of them. We ask that Christ be magnified. We ask that you be with us as we open up the Word of God, that the Word of God would speak in clarity and truth, that it would not be hindered by the vessel, but, Lord, that it would come to us as it is, as the very Word of God given to us, that we may mold and shape our lives to become more and more like you for your glory.
- We ask that you lead and guide in all these things, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Some biblical commentators will tell you that the events of Ezra and Nehemiah kind of overlap.
- They do overlap a bit, but they would tell you that the events that we find in Ezra chapter 10 happen after the rebuilding of the walls of Nehemiah that we find happening in the first few chapters of Nehemiah.
- I don't believe that that is the case. I have reasons for my understanding and interpretation of that, but I want you to be aware of that because, hey, we're Wednesday night, so we're studying the Word. We're not just hearing the Word, right?
- [2 : 2 8] So we understand that some think that there's some overlap, that actually the reconstruction of the walls had already taken place by the time we get here at this place in the book of Ezra.

Some believe that the walls were already rebuilt by the time Ezra made his way to Jerusalem. I would say that that is absolutely false. I would say that Ezra comes before Nehemiah, and we can read it in the succession of the kings of the Persian Empire, and that Ezra comes to reestablish who they are as the people of the Lord God Almighty, and he establishes them on the spiritual level.

Nehemiah is used of the Lord God Almighty to reconstruct the physical necessities and the physical security that we find in Jerusalem. And we ask ourselves, why?

Why was it so important when this remnant of people coming out of the Babylonian captivity, returning back to a decimated city? Because if you remember, Jeremiah and even Isaiah prophesied to the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem, that because of the unfaithfulness of the people of the Lord, that people would walk by Jerusalem and wag their head and say, this is what happens when you forsake the ways of the Lord God.

The walls were destroyed. The temple was destroyed. All these things were ransacked. The houses were destroyed. Why is God going to such an extent to rebuild the city? Well, we understand that.

[3 : 47] We know that because we're on this side of the New Testament, right? The city that would pay so much important of a role in the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, the presentation of the Lamb on the Temple of the Mount.

All those things, the triumphal entry, all those things had to be in that location, for that was the prophetic word given to us prior to the Ezra and Nehemiah time. Now, we understand that God is doing some amazing things in preparation for the coming of the Messiah and the Savior, who we know is Jesus Christ.

Now, because of that, he deals first with who they are as the people of the Lord spiritually, and then he undergirds them physically. What Ezra, what we find Ezra at right now, before we read the 10th chapter, Ezra had it as his purpose to study the word, to learn the word, to practice the word, and to teach the word. Remember that.

He set his heart to know the word of the Lord God Almighty, that he may practice it, and that he may teach it. He received a royal commission to return to Jerusalem to teach the inhabitants of Jerusalem the word of God.

He gets there with another remnant of people and brings the sacrifices and the offerings from the Persian king some 60 years after the reconstruction of the temple found in the first few chapters.

[5 : 05] Ezra chapters 1-6, we have the reconstruction of the temple. I'm trying to catch you up quickly. Ezra shows up in the 7th chapter with the commission to go teach.

They have a temple, but they don't have the scripture. Ezra is the connection from the temple, the physical building, to the spiritual reality. And he has the commission to go teach them the law.

He brings the sacrifices and the offering that the people in Babylon had sent ahead. He gets there, and after giving this, after offering the sacrifice, we find it in the first verse of chapter 9.

Immediately following these things, Ezra is told, all is not well in Jerusalem. He has come back to teach them the law, and the very first thing that he hears are the people here have taken foreign wives and even had children with them.

Now to us, we say, okay, well, they're living among a multitude of foreign people. Is this racially driven? It's not racially driven. It's not bigotry at all.

[6 : 06] It is for the preservation of their holiness and their sanctification. They're being set apart as the people of the Lord. It wasn't a race issue. It was a faith issue because what was going on, the people of the land were distorting their practices.

They were taking on the people of the land's worship practices and their faith and their beliefs. It has nothing to do with a racial concern. As a matter of fact, it is much like what Paul would say, what fellowship had a light with darkness and how the believer should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.

It is because too often we think, oh, we'll be a great influence upon them when the reality is they become the influence upon us. And this is what God is trying to do is preserve these people.

That's important because there is a prophetic promise that's running through Scripture. There's a promise that is waiting to be fulfilled. We celebrate that at Christmas. We celebrate that as we see the rest of Scripture.

And so Ezra hears of this reality and he's broken and he starts praying and he's praying there and he's confessing the sins of the nation, of his own sin. He's identifying with these people.

[7 : 17] And now we get to chapter 10. It says, Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women, and children gathered him from Israel.

For the people wept bitterly. Shekariah, the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land.

Yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children according to the counsel of my Lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God.

And let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. But we will be with you. Be courageous and act. Then Ezra rose and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel take oath that they would do according to this proposal.

So they took the oath. Then Ezra rose from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Johanan, the son of Elisha. Although he went there, he did not eat bread nor drink water, for he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

[8 : 29] They made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the exiles, that they should assemble at Jerusalem. And whoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the leaders of the elders, all his possessions should be forfeited, and he himself excluded from the assembly of the exiles.

So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month of the twentieth of the month. And all the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and the heavy rain.

Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession to the Lord God of your fathers and do his will and separate yourselves from the peoples of the lands and from the foreign wives.

Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, That's right. As you have said, so it is our duty to do. But there are many people. It is the rainy season, and we are not able to stand in the open, nor can the task be done in one or two days, for we have transgressed greatly in this matter.

Let our leaders represent the whole assembly, and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us.

[9 : 53] Only Jonathan, the son of Asahel, and Jehaziah, the son of Tikvah, opposed this with Meshulam and Shabbathiah, the Levites, supporting them. But the exiles did so, and Ezra the priest selected men who were heads of fathers' households, for each of their fathers' households, all of them by name.

So they convened on the first day of the tenth month to investigate the matter. They finished investigating all the men who had married foreign wives by the first day of the first month. Now these are the listing we won't read, but it tells us in verse 18, among the sons of the priests, and it gives the names, right?

It lists all the names of those they found. In the very last verse, verse 44 says, all these married foreign wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

I want you to see tonight the hope of holy reconciliation. The hope of holy reconciliation. When Ezra shows up in Jerusalem, he shows up for the purpose of teaching them the word.

Within the book of Ezra, we never find Ezra doing that purpose. We find him in the book of Nehemiah fulfilling that purpose when they construct the platform that he stands on with the Levites, and he's instructing them.

[11 : 09] We've talked about that. And the people stand with all the gathered people, the men, the women, the children stand for half a day, and they hear the word read, and then the Levites go among them, and they give them the sense for the remaining half of the day, and they do that day after day after day.

And he teaches them the words. The very first time in Scripture we ever read of someone standing on a raised platform preaching and teaching. Ezra is the example. By the way, Ezra, and what we find in the book of Nehemiah, is also the example that we use for standing when we hear the word of God.

So it is Ezra who does that. But we don't find him doing it within the book of Ezra. Why? Because when he gets there, the people aren't ready to hear the word. They haven't been living faithfully up to that point.

There's a matter at hand that is brought to his attention very quickly. So there has to be a reconciliation between the people of the Lord and the Lord God Almighty. For they would have ears and not hear, and have eyes and not see.

Because the understanding of the word is a spiritual matter, and the spiritual issues had to be dealt with first. We looked at this when we looked at the ninth chapter a couple of weeks ago and said how easy it would be to be Ezra, and to hear of this, and immediately begin to be rebuking and correcting and admonishing and discipling everyone that has done wrong.

[12 : 28] We do find in Nehemiah that Nehemiah grabs some people by the hair and plucks their hair out. Sometimes I've thought that's a pretty good practice to do as a pastor, but I've never done it.

But what we find in Ezra, Ezra has the pastoral heart, by the way, and this is why as a pastor you can't base your ministry upon Nehemiah. Nehemiah is a political leader. He can pull your hair out and get away with it.

Ezra is a spiritual leader. Ezra pulled his own hair out. When he heard about it, he began to pluck the hair out of his head and the hair out of his beard, and he was broken because he had a pastoral heart.

And he began to weep and to lament and to cry and to confess before he said anything to any of the people. But what we find in the tenth chapter, it tells us that one verse, we have sinned, yet there is hope in Israel.

What appeared to be a hopeless situation of people who had a much smaller temple than Solomon's temple, a wall still in ruins, the majority of the exiles, as they are called in this tenth chapter, for they are not an independent nation yet.

- [13 : 43] They are still the exiles of the Babylonian captivity because they are still under the rule of the Persian Empire. They are not recognized as independent. The majority of them lived without or outside the confines of Jerusalem.

They had built themselves fine houses and paneled the inside of them. They were more concerned about their own personal well-being than they had been in walking faithfully before the Lord God.

And they needed to be reconciled. These are people who are living as the world, in the world, because the majority of them, if not all of them, by this time I would say all of them, had been born into Babylonian captivity.

Sixty years had transpired since the completion of the tabernacle or the temple. And we know that the temple was begun seventy years after their entrance into the Babylonian captivity.

So those who were there now, each and every one of them, had been born into the confines of captivity. They were born slaves of the world.

- [14 : 53] Exiles. Yet they had the identity as the people of God, but they needed a reconciliation, right? Much like when God gets His people out of Egypt, it took a moment of redemption.

In a moment, He cast them out. The ten plagues came down. Pharaoh told them to leave. In a moment, He led them across the parted waters of the Red Sea. And it took forty years to get Egypt out of them.

That's why they wandered around in the wilderness. That's the sanctification. We refer to it as the progressive sanctification. There was an immediate salvation. They were redeemed in a moment. They were sanctified over forty years progressively.

And here we see in a moment, they are offered an opportunity to go back. Now they've been back for some time, but yet they're still not living in relationships.

So what hope is there for a holy reconciliation? I want you to see hope that exists in just a number of ways. Number one, we see there is hope because of the confidence we can have in prayer.

- [15 : 53] Hope because of the confidence we can have in prayer. By the way, this is not just an Old Testament issue. Just finished reading a church history book, which I know to many of you seems very boring, and to most of you it would indeed be, but I enjoy it.

So just finished reading a church history book. It's a very recent church history book. It actually came out latter part of 2024, so that's a recent history book. It spoke of even in our day and time, we are now reaching the pinnacle.

2025 was the projected year, so we're there. We are now reaching the pinnacle when the majority of Christians is no longer in the West. The majority of worldwide Christians are what we refer to in the global South.

African, Asian population. We have been surpassed now that the missionaries are coming to us because we have been surpassed in that reality because, speaking with a son earlier today, and he's talking about this in his class even in school, the vast growing majority of Americans are what we refer to as nuns.

N-O-N-E-S. No religious affiliation whatsoever. No desire for it. But what hope is there of a holy reconciliation in a world like that?

- [17 : 10] Where they're living as everyone else would live. Will we have confidence in prayer? The confidence we have in prayer. Ezra saw what seemed to be an impossible situation.

Ezra's response was to pray. And look at what it says, Now while Ezra was praying. Now while Ezra was praying and making confession. We get asked this question quite often.

Carrie and I do. I have this family member. I have this neighbor. I have this individual. And oh, I've shared the gospel with them so many times. And I've invited them to the church. And I've presented the gospel so many times.

Now they're getting upset at me. And they're kind of getting off put with me. And they get a little offended by me. And they think I'm being pushy. What should I do? And our answer is always, Pray.

Pray. Pray. I saw my wife pray for 11 years for an individual she couldn't share the gospel with. 11 years. At the end of 11 years, one day that person ran down the aisle.

[18 : 14] Hadn't even been a sermon preached that day. Came to Christ. Completely changed their life. Why? Because we have confidence in prayer. While Ezra was praying, we say, Oh, what Ezra should have done was find these people.

What Ezra should have done was go out and rebuke these people. What Ezra should have done was try to correct these people. Friends, sometimes the greatest thing we can ever do is just to pray. While Ezra was praying and weeping and confessing, someone once said, The church spends so much time getting bent out of shape and upset over matters, we ought to spend a little bit more time weeping over them.

Instead of getting upset at the ways of the world, why don't we weep over them? Spurgeon said, What prayer does is prayer pulls the cord that rings the bell in heaven.

Says, Father, here I am. While Ezra was praying, from the outside it looked as if he was doing nothing, right? But Ezra knew that the one thing I can do, the one thing that I must do, is pray.

How would Ezra know that? Because Ezra had set his heart to study the Word and to practice the Word. He had set his heart to live it out.

[19 : 30] And he knew there could be no instruction without a preparation of the hearts and minds. Friend, listen to me. Conviction doesn't come because of what we do. Conviction is not our work.

Someone ever comes to me and says, Oh, Pastor, you really convicted me by that sermon. The better way of saying that is, the Spirit convicted me by the words that came out of your mouth.

Because Jesus told us in that great teaching at the end of His life that when I leave, the Father will send the Spirit, and the Spirit will come to what? To bring conviction upon the world.

As much as we may try to penetrate to the depth of an individual and to bring conviction upon their heart, the only way we can do it is to pray. And we have confidence in that because prayer is the greatest work and the greatest labor that we can ever do.

It is the most effective thing that we have. It is the greatest way to change our circumstances and our society, and it is the greatest way to impact our communities, is simply to pray.

[20 : 34] And we have confidence. I can't remember who said it, but I believe that it is absolutely true because I've tried to read enough history to make my own determination, but every great movement of God can be traced back to a kneeling figure somewhere.

Every great movement. Every great awakening, every great revival, every great spiritual movement of God, not of man, can be traced back to a kneeling figure somewhere.

Everyone. So have confidence in prayer. Confidence in prayer is followed by the very next verse, and we see the conviction that comes from the work of God.

Ezra was praying that while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, look at this, a very large assembly, men, women, children gathered to him from Israel.

Ezra had done nothing. Go back to the ninth chapter. Ezra was told about a problem, and Ezra's only response to that problem was to go before the house of the Lord and to fall on his face, to pull out his hair, to pluck out his beard, to tear his garments, and start praying.

[21 : 47] He had not said a word to anyone. He had not issued an edict to anyone. He had not made any announcements. He had not told anyone why he was doing that. He had said nothing. And while he was praying, God was working, and God was doing a convicting work, because the men and the women and the children, they came.

And what do they say? We have done a horrific thing. The convicting work of God. He alone is bringing conviction upon their hearts and minds.

He is setting them where they ought to be. They come, and it says, We have been unfaithful to our God. Who has told them that? Ezra hadn't said anything. All Ezra had done was come, give gold, silver.

He had given sacrifices. They had burnt them on the altar. He heard about it, and he started praying. Again, we go back to this promise that our God is such a sovereign God that He makes Himself known through revelation.

He makes Himself known through conviction. And He can penetrate to the depth of every being around us, far greater than we ever could. Too often, we try to make the work of God the work of man, and we try to accomplish what only He can.

[23 : 08] We say, Father, if You turn the hearts of the kings in the palm of Your hand, surely You can turn the hearts of every other individual to understand their desperate ways. How did you come to Christ? I tell someone, I think about it all the time.

I think about the way I came to Christ. If someone ever persuaded you that you needed to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you were persuaded by man, then some other man can persuade you away from it.

If someone talked you into coming to Christ, then a greater, more eloquent speaker can talk you out of it. Why do we see so many people leaving the church today?

Why do we see so many young people leaving the church today? We're not seeing them. Thankfully, God is bringing them to us, and we rejoice in that. But why do we see it? It's because so many have been talked into it in youth groups and Sunday school classes, and they go into college, and they're talked out of it.

Because what they've been giving is an opinion or a thought. But when the Lord Jesus Himself shows up and brings conviction upon your heart and draws you to Himself and allows you to understand how much He loves you, how much He cares for you, how much He gave for you, and you surrender your life because of His great love for you, no matter what anybody tells you, you know to the very depth of your being He loves you.

[24 : 30] And if you know that He loves you, I don't care. You can tell me all day long. You can take me to the back corner all day long, and you can say, Oh, your wife said this, this, this, and this about you, and Carrie was back there, and she was dogging you, and I don't think Carrie likes you at all.

And I look at you and say, That's baloney. I've known her for 27 years. We've been married that long, and she loves me. She's given herself for me. She sacrifices every day. It is a love that goes beyond opinion.

It's conviction, and so much more so with Jesus Christ. If you tell me, well, He doesn't care for you, I'd say, Well, you're lying. I don't care what your opinion may be. I don't know what scientific evidence you want to bring before me, but I can tell you, my heart has changed because He changed it.

And it was a convicting work that He brought, not man. Now, did He use the avenue and the conduit of man? Absolutely. Because the ways of God flow through such useless vessels as me and you.

But it is not the work of man. People were praying for me before I came to Christ.

[25 : 36] I know they were. And then one night when I couldn't go to sleep, He wouldn't let me go to sleep. And He began to convict me, and I got up and stood before Him and said, Lord, here am I, much like these people.

It is the convicting work of God, and we know there is hope of reconciliation because, friend, listen to me, God still convicts the hearts and minds of people today. He's still doing it.

And we have confidence that there can be reconciliation. Number three, we see there is confidence and hope of holy reconciliation because of the confession of humbled men.

The confession of humbled men. And these people who came, Ezra looks up, and they say, We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the people of the land.

So there's the confession, We've done wrong. Later on, the multitude will gather. They're standing in the rain, and they will confess, For we have transgressed greatly in this matter. It is a confession of guilt.

[26 : 44] But that's not the only confession because that's what conviction brings is confession. But look at the conviction. It is the one that we've already alluded to there in verse 2.

Yet now there is hope in Israel. It is a confession of guilt, but also a confession of hope. When you have been truly humbled, and the Lord God has convicted you of sin, this is why conviction is not a bad thing.

People don't like to talk about conviction because we think conviction is judgment. No, conviction is the understanding that we stand in judgment. But conviction brings about confession. Conviction says, I am guilty.

Confession says, But I have hope. Conviction says, I deserve death, hell, and the grave. But confession says, But yet now there is hope. Conviction says, I have done wrong.

But confession says, But still there's hope. For whoever confesses the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Right? Why do they have a confession? He says we have a confession because it says, Let us cut a covenant is what the legacy standard says.

[27 : 49] New American said, Let us make a covenant with the Lord our God. I kind of like the literal translation of the legacy standard there where it says cut a covenant because it gives me the imagery of Abram. When Abram cuts the covenant with God, remember when Abram cuts that covenant in Genesis 17, the Abrahamic covenant, literally cutting the covenant, they cut the animals in two and they put them here and there and on either side.

And to cut a covenant would be to have animals split in two and you pass one way and I pass another way and we cut across the cut animals that are the sacrifices and you do your part, I'll do my part and this will be an agreement.

Remember, there's something unique that happened in Abram's covenant. He was there and the vultures kept coming and he was running the birds off and he was keeping everything off of the sacrifices and Abram got tired because of all his chasing vultures, right?

And he sits down and he falls asleep and when Abram wakes up, there's this fiery furnace passing back and forth between the sacrifices there. The covenant had been cut and Abraham had been asleep because Abraham has nothing to do.

It's a covenant based solely upon the Lord God Almighty. God Himself had walked back and forth between the covenant. He said, this covenant is based on who I am, Abram, not who you are.

[28 : 57] And so when we say there is hope in Israel, it's because the hope is not based upon who we are, but who He is. And these people confess, we don't know it all, but we know we've done wrong.

We know there's still hope. We can go and we can confess the Lord God Almighty. We can cast off. Now let us put away our wives and our children. By the way, there's no record of them ever casting the children out.

Some people read this and say, oh, that's so bad. They did that. No, they do put their wives away from them. It never says that they cast their children out. It says they're willing to do it. Why? Because just like you should be willing to cut the hand off, the foot off, and pluck the eye out, there's a willingness to make a break with sin, right?

There's the confession. It says whatever we need to do, let's do it. So not only have we done wrong, we're willing to repent drastically of it, and we know that we can make this covenant.

I like what they say here. They get Ezra because Ezra had come for a purpose, right? Verse 4 says, Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. You know what they're confessing?

[30 : 06] They're confessing that they will submit to someone else. This is your responsibility, Ezra. You instruct us and tell us what to do. That takes humility, by the way.

We have done wrong. You're broken over our wrongdoings. And now, Ezra, we want you to arise and lead us and we're willing to submit to your leadership.

Because how we've been doing it is not working. For it's your responsibility. I like that. Not because it gives pride. Because actually, what Ezra does, Ezra gets up, I believe it's Warren Wiersbe that highlights this.

What Ezra does is he gets up and he forms a committee. Not all committees are good, by the way, in Scripture, but this one seems to be good. He takes the priests and the Levites and he forms a committee and says, I have the authority to form this committee.

I form this committee. He goes to a room and fasts and the committee does the work. So it's not a pride thing. The committee does all the investigation and they bring it back while he's fasting because he's still mourning and praying.

[31 : 09] He goes into that room. That's why it says he goes into that chamber but he did not eat for he was fasting. He was fasting for that month while the committee was out investigating because when the people come and they stand in the rain, they're not standing before Ezra, they're standing before the committee.

And then they're broken. The committee says, you guys have done wrong. You have been unfaithful. It tells us in verse 10, you have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession to the Lord God of your fathers and do his will and separate yourselves from the people of the land and from the foreign wives.

Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, that's right. It was Ezra's responsibility to lead them and now look at what it says here. As you have said, so it is our duty to do.

Here's another confession. They confess the reality that they have a part to play as well. They have to work out as we would refer to it in the New Testament, work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

It is their responsibility to do it. Finally, we see we have hope of holy reconciliation not because of the confession of humble men, but because of the consistency of accountability and judgment.

[32 : 20] And this one's very quick. The consistency that we find here. When Ezra appoints the council of Levites and priests, Levites and priests, don't miss that, and they call all the people to them.

It's the rainy season. That's why I love scriptures because it's real life stuff. The people are trembling because of the fear of the Lord and because of the heavy rain. And they're standing there. And the council calls them out and says, you've done wrong.

They said, yes, it's right. You're right. It's our responsibility to do it. But we can't stand here in the rain. There's too many. It's going to take too long. So appoint leaders. And Ezra does. They appoint leaders, heads of the households. And we kind of lose it if we're not careful here.

But it says in verse 14, let our leaders represent the whole assembly. Here it is. And let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times together with the elders and judges of each city until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us.

What is it saying? You find each and every one of them and let them all stand before you individually. Each one. And it tells us that they did so.

[33 : 31] Verse 17 says they finished investigating all the men who had married foreign wives by the first day of the first month. And then, the part we didn't read, they list their names.

They list them by name, by trial. And it's telling because look at what it says. Among the sons of the priest who had married foreign wives.

And then in verse 23, of Levites. And then it tells us in verse 24, of singers and of gatekeepers. And then it tells us in verse 25, of Israel.

So you have priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and lay people. None were excluded because they held a prominent position in society.

Every man was held accountable. Everyone on equal ground. And the council that was doing the investigation were priests and Levites.

[34 : 33] There's no favoritism. There's none of that. It was each one is responsible for their actions. If you're a priest, you're responsible. If you're a Levite, you're responsible. If you're a singer or a gatekeeper, you're responsible.

If you're a layperson, you're responsible. I love that because we don't see the layman being judged and the priests and Levites being ignored. There's an accountability here.

And it's a consistency of judgment because the reality is it doesn't matter who we are in this world. Each and every one of us will stand before the throne someday and give an account for our lives. And we stand before the same one to face the same judgment to give the same accounting.

For the believer, it's an accounting of how we lived after we proclaimed Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. what we did with the talents He entrusted to us. Each and every one of us.

And there's hope for holy reconciliation because while we may have done wrong, yet there is still hope. There's still hope. And that's how the book of Ezra ends. Nehemiah comes.

[35 : 44] They set the city in order. And the next time Ezra shows up on the scene, the people are ready to hear the Word. And they're broken over the Word. And they mourn over the Word.

And they cry over the Word. And they rejoice and they celebrate in the Word. Why? Because they've been reconciled. I'd love to say the matter is done, but you know, you read the rest of, as Paul Harvey used to say, the rest of the story, you read Nehemiah, by the time we get to the end of Nehemiah, he's plucking people's hair out and pulling them out of the temple.

They go back to their old ways. Why? Because that's what people do. And if we're not careful, so will we. But yet there is hope.

And we find that for us in Ezra 10. Thank you.