

THINKING IT THROUGH

Remember the exact problem Ezra and Judah faced here: some of them had taken pagan wives who had remained pagan; there had been no conversion to Yahweh.

4. Is Ezra 9-10 a model for the church to follow?

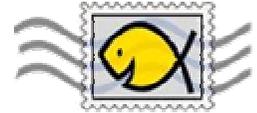


What follows is my attempt at an answer; it is not likely the last word on the matter.

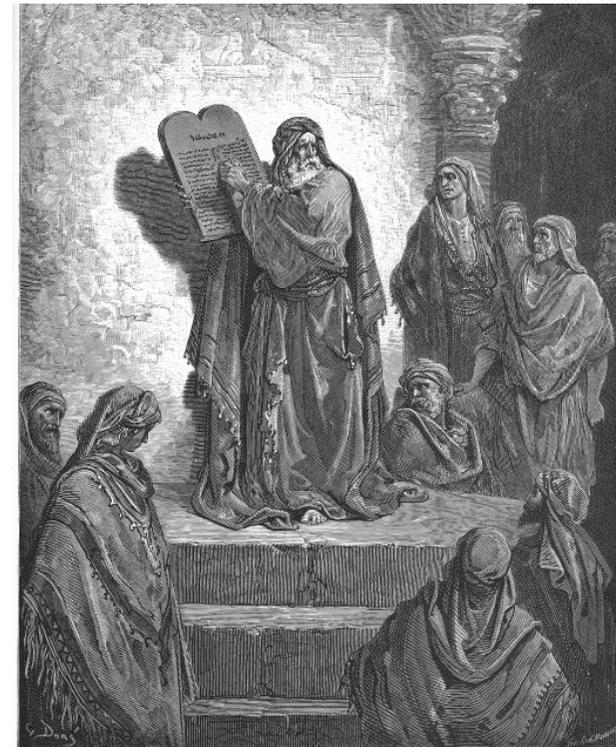
Principally, yes. What we see in Ezra 9-10 is Exodus 34:11-16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-5 applied in a new post-exilic situation. Do those texts not still apply to the church? Aren't such texts what informs Paul's stricture in 1 Corinthians 7:39.

Marriage within the covenant people is regulated by the word of God because there is always a concern for the seed, for godly seed (Mal 2:15). Ezra's action in these chapters could be viewed as a corporate application of Matthew 5:29-30.

Particularly, no. The problem in Ezra involves covenant people contracting marriages with pagans. If this occurs in a new covenant context, i.e., in the church, such Christians should be, in accord with Matthew 18:15-20, admonished and commanded to repent of such deliberate, blatant sin. If there is repentance, would that require divorce or excommunication? Wouldn't Ezra 9-10 point that way? Not necessarily. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 about continuing on in marriage with unbelieving spouses encourages us to see Ezra 9 and 10 as descriptive, not prescriptive. What's imperative is the principle. What's at stake is the Holiness.



EZRA CHAPTER 10



'DOING' REPENTANCE

DOING REPENTANCE

Ezra Chapter 10

Ezra was an Israelite and yet also a high government agent. Here he is, throwing appearance to the wind in grief and this brings together a crowd of males, females, and minors that were sharing Ezra's attitude.

THE MAJOR ROLES OF MINOR CHARACTERS (EZRA 10:1-4)

1. What is motivating Shecaniah toward repentance?

☞ **Discuss** the connection between hope and repentance. Discuss also the nature of Shecaniah's suggestion. Is it vague or specific? Does it matter?

The first word is "hope," but Shecaniah's idea of hope is not some vague optimism. Rather, it is a call to covenant with God, a definitive covenant in which there is fruit that shows repentance. It is a repentance that takes the hard road: "to put away all the wives and their children." Hope is often hard hope.

2. What is the connection between his suggestion and the law?

Leadership is necessary and often solitary, however, repentance of corporate sin is a corporate act. And so, Shecaniah places responsibility upon Ezra for leadership in the matter, but at the same time offers him the support and encouragement of the people.

THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY (EZRA 10:7-14) (

Ezra's grief is a reflection of the same attitude Moses had after the bull-calf episode (Ex 34:28; Deut 9:18). Can Ezra be considered a second Moses here?

☞ **Discuss** the breakdown of this section:

- An Accusation (vs10)
- A Demand (vs11)
- A Willingness (vs12)
- A Postponement (vs13)
- A Proposal (vs14)

The last proposal is very important in ensuring a fair investigation. This was not to be a haphazard or heartless process.

It is important to note that the problem was not ethnicity, since Israel had earlier welcomed people from non-Jewish backgrounds (cf. Ez 2:43-57).

3. What then, is the likely reason for the dismissal of these 'strange' wives?

So, what appeared at first to be a cold and calculated disregard for life is actually the process of repentance and separation. It is conceivable, considering the care taken in the investigation (10:16-17), that at least some of these families could have repented, separated themselves from pagan practices and remained intact.

NOTE

The investigation took about three months with only one or two cases considered per day. With a population of between 30,000-50,000 only 111 had been found guilty. Were there pagan wives who, through their repentance had been declared innocent?