



## 3 more studies from the Book of Ezra – Part 2

### **Please Note the following:**

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL** and **NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

## Study 1 – Learn it, Live it, Teach it!

Ezra 7:1-28

*(Sermon on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025)*

### Context

Ezra 7:1 begins with “after these things”. Sixty largely uneventful years passed between Ezra chapter 6 and Ezra chapter 7. The ruler of Persia at the end of that period was Artaxerxes, who is also known in history as Artaxerxes Longimanus, the successor to Xerxes, the king who married Esther. The events of the book of Esther took place between Ezra chapter 6 and chapter 7.<sup>1</sup>

### Read Ezra 7:1-10

1. Finally, the author, Ezra, shows up in this chapter. Why is his genealogy in verses 1 to 5 important?

*Ezra’s genealogy traces his ancestry all the way back to Aaron [Moses’ brother], the first high priest. This was paramount because Ezra is about to take on a significant religious role—teaching the law of God, leading reforms, and re-establishing worship. His priestly ancestry gives him legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the Jewish people.*

*By listing key ancestors—like **Eleazar, Phinehas, and Zadok**—Ezra is linked to pivotal figures in Israel’s religious life. These men were known for their zeal and fidelity to God, which implies Ezra stands in that same faithful tradition. It also reinforces continuity in Israel’s covenantal relationship with God, despite the exile.*

2. What qualifications does Ezra have in verses 1 to 6?

- *Ezra has priestly qualifications – as a descendant of Aaron, this gives him spiritual authority as a priest; the right to serve in the temple and teach God’s Law*
- *Ezra is a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses (verse 6)*
- *Ezra had the ‘hand of God’ upon Him (verse 6)*
- *Ezra was commissioned by King Artaxerxes who gave him permission to leave Babylon and to be a leader of the people*

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<sup>1</sup> David Guzik – Study Guide for Ezra Chapter 7.

3. What favour did Ezra gain in verse 6? Why?

*Ezra gained the favor of King Artaxerxes, who granted him everything he asked for, including permission to return to Jerusalem, lead others, and carry resources to support temple worship.*

*Why? Because the hand of God was with Ezra.*

4. Who came with Ezra according to verse 7?

*Israelites – likely laypeople from the general population.*

*Priests – those from the line of Aaron who served in the temple.*

*Levites – members of the tribe of Levi who assisted in temple duties but were not priests.*

*Musicians – responsible for music and singing in temple worship.*

*Gatekeepers – guarded the entrances to the temple, ensuring its sanctity.*

*Temple servants – also called the Nethinim, they performed support roles in the temple, such as cleaning, maintenance, and assisting the Levites.*

*This group of people represented a well-rounded religious community, showing that Ezra's return was not just a personal one — but was a spiritual community whose purpose was to restore worship and temple life in Jerusalem.*

5. What do we find out about Ezra's journey from Babylon?

*The duration of his journey was 4 months (from 1<sup>st</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> month to first day of 5<sup>th</sup> month).*

*The passage doesn't give us the actual distance but the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem would have been a long and dangerous one! The approximate distance is 900 miles (1400Km) – mostly on foot or with caravans of camels.*

*But we are told Ezra had God's help – "the gracious hand of his God was on him" (verse 9)*

6. Verse 10 says Ezra devoted himself to "**study, observance, and teaching**" of the Law of the Lord.

Why do you think all three are important for a spiritual leader?

**Study** – A spiritual leader must first **know** what God says. Studying the Bible builds a solid foundation of God's truth, God's wisdom and discernment.

*Without a proper study of God's Word, a spiritual leader may lead people astray or misrepresent God's Word.*

**Observance** (obedience) – *Ezra didn't just study God's Word, he obeyed it. A spiritual leader has integrity and credibility – this comes from putting into practice what they preach! Obedience also reflects a **heart surrendered to God**, not just intellectual knowledge.*

**Teaching** – *Ezra didn't just keep God's Word to himself – he taught others. A spiritual leader's role includes helping people to understand and apply God's truth to their own lives. Teaching builds a community of believers and ensures faith in Jesus is passed on to the next generation (e.g., Young Timothy was taught by his mother, grandmother and the Apostle Paul)*

Which of these three areas might be most challenging for you personally?  
*For those who find **studying** God's Word challenging – it's often because life is busy. For ministers and spiritual leaders, time in God's Word is often spent preparing Bible talks or children's lessons or Bible Study answers; and not about personal growth. For spiritual leaders they often prioritize teaching over learning.*

**Obedience** is often the **most personal and challenging area** because it requires humility, discipline, and letting God's Word shape our attitudes, habits, and responses in daily life. It's about **living with integrity**, even when it's inconvenient. Sometimes we fall into the trap of pleasing people instead of pleasing God!

*Some people find **teaching** the most challenging, especially if they lack confidence or feel they're not good communicators. Other people might struggle with **courage**—especially if God's truth is unpopular or confronts sin.*

### Read Ezra 7:11-16

7. How does King Artaxerxes support Ezra's mission in verses 11 to 16?

- *King Artaxerxes respects Ezra's **religious authority** – as a priest and teacher of the Law – see verse 12 – “To Ezra the priest, teacher of the Law of the God of heaven”*

- King Artaxerxes gives Ezra **political and legal backing** – allowing Ezra and any of his fellow Israelites to go with him, back to Jerusalem, if they wish to – verse 13.
- King Artaxerxes gives Ezra **a specific mission** in verse 14 – “to **inquire** about Judah and Jerusalem **with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand**”
- King Artaxerxes gives **silver and gold from the King and his advisers** (i.e., from the Royal Treasury) [as well as silver and gold from Babylon – as well as free will offerings from the people and priests – which was used to buy bulls, rams, and male lambs] verse 16. All this was funding for the Temple sacrifices and worship!

### Read Ezra 7:17-26

8. How does King Artaxerxes support Ezra’s mission in verses 17 to 26?
  - King Artaxerxes **authorizes Ezra to use funds** – Ezra is instructed to use the silver and gold to buy animals and offerings for temple worship (verse 17)
  - King Artaxerxes allows Ezra and his fellow Israelites to **use the remainder of the silver and gold to purchase whatever is within God’s will** (verse 18)
  - King Artaxerxes instructs Ezra to **deliver all the temple articles to God’s temple** (verse 19)
  - King Artaxerxes **authorizes payment for anything else that might be needed for the temple** (verse 20)
  - King Artaxerxes **commands local officials** (treasurers beyond the River) **to supply Ezra with whatever he needs for the temple** – with very generous limitations – up to 100 talents of silver; 100 cors of wheat; 100 baths of wine; a hundred baths of olive oil; and unlimited salt (verses 21 to 23)
  - The **priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers** at this house of God, are all **exempt from paying taxes** (verse 24)
  - King Artaxerxes gives **legal authority to Ezra to appoint magistrates and judges** and to teach the law. Ezra is also given **authority to enforce the law**, including punishments like banishment, fines, imprisonment, or even death. (verses 25 and 26)
9. **Ponder:** What does King Artaxerxes’ support reveal about how God can work through secular authorities?



- God is **sovereign over all things** – even moving the heart of a pagan King like Artaxerxes
  - God **provides in unexpected ways**. God's provision is not limited to "spiritual" or "religious" sources – He can use governments, laws and resources too.
  - God **opens doors that no one else can** – He arranges for permission for Ezra to return; provides money and resources for worship; and gives authority to teach and enforce the law.
  - And God **also provides immeasurably more than we could ever ask!**
10. Have you ever seen God use unexpected people or groups to support His work?
- A Non-Christian government candidate for election donated money to our youth group activities
  - Non-Christian principals/teachers supporting scripture in schools
  - As we mentioned last week, Andrew Bolt on Sky News standing up for Christians when they have been vilified
  - Non-Christian parents supporting Friday Jaffa both with time/money
  - Non-Christian Aged Care staff supporting worship services in Aged Care facilities
11. The phrase "**the hand of the Lord/God**" is used three times in this chapter (verses 6, 9, 28)

What does this tell us about Ezra's success?

*It shows that Ezra's success was not primarily because of his skills, or priestly status, or his strategy, but because of God's active involvement in Ezra's life and ministry.*

*God was the source of Ezra's blessings – verse 6 – the King granted everything Ezra asked because the 'hand of the Lord' was on Ezra*

*God was Ezra's protection and sustainer on his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem – travelling 900 miles (1400Km) on a hazardous journey – because – verse 9 – God's 'gracious hand' was upon Ezra*

*God gave Ezra courage and confidence in leadership – because – verse 28 – because the 'hand of God' was with Ezra.*

How can we recognize and depend on God's hand in our own callings and ministries?

*We can **recognize God's hand** is upon us when:*

- *He opens closed doors/closed opportunities to us*
- *He answers our prayers*
- *He provides for us*
- *He protects us from harm*
- *Confirmation from other believers who see God's hand on you!*

*We can **depend on God's hand** when:*

- *We pray consistently and honestly – and surrender our plans to Him and ask for His help and guidance*
- *By staying grounded in God's Word – study, obey, teach –*
- *By trusting Him with the situations we face in life and the outcomes*
- *By giving God the glory (both publicly and privately) when things go well and we are blessed.*

12. Why is it important for Ezra not only to teach the Law but also to appoint leaders and judges? (verses 25 to 26) How important is the role of God's Word in all of this?

- *Teaching informs people, but leaders and judges are needed to apply and uphold what is taught. Ezra's mission wasn't just about knowledge—it was about transforming a whole community to live under God's law. Truth must be taught, but it must also be lived and upheld in the community we live in!*
- *Ezra could not personally teach and oversee everyone in his community; so he was told to appoint others who could lead, interpret and apply God's word to people's lives.*
- *God's Word is central to teaching, leadership and justice. These are all built on the foundation of God's Law found in His Word. The leaders and judges were not implementing their own personal opinions revealing and applying God's Word to people's lives!*

13. **Ponder:** The King's letter focused on right worship and proper justice according to God's Law. How would you assess your worship and obedience of God, and how would you help others to do the same?

*To assess our own worship and obedience to God, we need to ask ourselves some questions:*

- *Do I worship God on Sundays only or with my whole life?*
- *Is my worship sincere or by rote?*
- *Am I giving a fair proportion of my time, talent and resources in service to God – or am I short changing God?*
- *Am I obeying God's Word, even when no-one is watching?*
- *Do I practice what I teach?*
- *Would non-Christians see me as a hypocrite?*
- *Am I quick to repent when God's Word or another person convicts me of my sin?*
- *Do I show the love of Jesus consistently or half-heartedly or begrudgingly?*

*To help others assess their worship and justice:*

- *Set an example of humble obedience to others*
- *Teach God's Word clearly*
- *Ask good reflection (ponder) questions in small groups or one-on-one, so that people can examine their hearts and minds*
- *Encourage and disciple people in their walk with Jesus*
- *Pray for them*

### **Read Ezra 7:27-28**

14. How does Ezra respond to God's favour and the King's support?

*Ezra praises God for moving the king's heart to support the temple and honor His name (verse 27).*

*Ezra acknowledges God's hand as the true source of strength and encouragement (verse 28).*

*Ezra praises God for giving him the courage to gather leaders to join him for the journey to Jerusalem (verse 28)*



15. **Ponder:** What can we learn from Ezra in this chapter?

- *Be devoted to God's Word—study it, live it, and teach it.*
- *Trust God's hand in all things—He always guides and provides.*
- *Respond to God's blessings with praise and humility.*
- *Lead others with courage and wisdom.*
- *Raise up others to carry God's truth forward.*

16. How might the following New Testament passages relate to **Ezra 7**?

**Luke 1:57-66**

*Luke 1:57–66 and Ezra 7 both show that **God appoints and empowers individuals to fulfill His purposes**. Whether it's Ezra teaching the Law or John preparing the way for the Lord, both are marked by God's hand, calling people to return to Him.*

**Acts 11:19-21**

*Again, in both passages, God's hand was with Ezra and the with those scattered by persecution in the Early Church in Acts. In the latter – verse 21 – the Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. What we see is that when God's hand is on His people, His Word spreads, lives are changed and the His Mission keeps going forward.*

**2 Timothy 2:14-17a**

***Faithful Teaching of God's Word***

- *Ezra devoted himself to **studying, observance, and teaching the Law of the Lord** (Ezra 7:10).*
- *Paul urges Timothy to do the same: to **correctly handle the Word of Truth** (2 Tim 2:15).*

***Guarding Against False Teaching***

- *Ezra's leadership included appointing judges and leaders to ensure God's Law was rightly followed (Ezra 7:25-26), helping guard the community against error*

- Paul warns against quarrelling about words (2 Timothy 2:14) and warns against false teaching which will spread like gangrene (2 Tim 2:17a).

### ***The Importance of Sound Doctrine for God's People***

- Both passages emphasize the **importance of truth** as the foundation for spiritual life and leadership.
- Ezra's careful teaching and leadership helped restore God's people to faithful obedience, just as Paul encourages Timothy to maintain purity in teaching.

### **Romans 13:1**

*Both Ezra 7 and Romans 13:1 show that God is sovereign in installing and uninstalling leaders, kings and rulers of nations. No authority over people exists unless it has been established by God.*

*Both passages teach that God can sovereignly use leaders, kings and rulers of nations to advance His kingdom, and we as believers are called to respect and wisely engage with these authorities for His purposes.*

### **John 19:8-11**

*John 19:8-11 and Ezra 7 both show that God is sovereign over earthly rulers, using them to accomplish His purposes—even when they are unaware. Believers can trust God's control amid human authority. For example, Jesus makes it clear to Pontius Pilate that he would have no authority or power over Jesus, if God had not granted Pilate that authority!*

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

*Ezra 7 and Ephesians 4:11-12 both emphasize the importance of God-appointed leaders who teach, guide, and equip God's people for effective service and spiritual growth.*

### **Matthew 7:28-29**

*Ezra 7 and Matthew 7:28-29 both highlight the power and authority that come from faithfully teaching God's Word, which leads to transformation and amazement in those who hear His Word.*

## Matthew 28:19-20

*Both Ezra and the Apostles were commissioned. Ezra commissioned by God (through Artaxerxes) and the Apostles commissioned directly by Jesus Himself!*

*In Ezra 7, Ezra has the vital role of **teaching**, promoting **obedience** to God's Word and to **leading** God's people. In Matthew 28:19-20, the disciples are called to the same role – **teaching**, **obedience** and **leading**. The disciples are to **teach** what Jesus commanded; they are to obey by **teaching** and baptizing and they are to **lead** people, by making disciples.*

## Acts 1:8

*In Ezra, Ezra is **empowered by the 'hand of God'** (verses 6, 9 and 28). In Acts 1:8, the disciples are **empowered by the Holy Spirit**, promised by Jesus! Both passages show that God enables and equips His servants so they can fulfil His purposes!*

*Ezra is God's **witness** to God's truth by teaching and living God's Law. In Acts 1:8, the disciples are called to be Jesus' witnesses, which involves teaching, obeying and living out the Gospel.*

## John 4:23-24

*Ezra 7 and John 4:23–24 both highlight that true worship must be based on God's truth. Ezra laid the foundation for sincere worship by teaching God's Law, pointing forward to the kind of worship Jesus described: worship from the heart, in Spirit and in truth.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Ezra 7:1-28?

*God's Hand equips faithful leadership*

*OR*

*God equips the willing*

*OR*

*Live the Word*



**What light globe moment did you have?**

Where is **Jesus** in **Ezra 7:1-28**?

- *Ezra is a type of Christ – Ezra is a priest and teacher of God’s Word who calls people to obey God’s Word and live it. Jesus is the ultimate priest and teacher and fulfiller of God’s Word, who lives perfectly and calls others to follow.*
- *Ezra is a priest and mediator between the people and God – called to bring spiritual reformation and restore worship. Jesus is our Great High Priest and Mediator (Hebrews 4:14-16) who restores our relationship with God through His life, death and resurrection.*
- *The Hand of God was on Ezra (repeated in three verses) – God’s hand comes down in a most personal and miraculous way, when God becomes flesh – in Jesus - and He lives on Earth – to teach, lead and save His people.*
- *In verse 12, Artaxerxes is described as the ‘king of kings’ – which is ironic since Jesus is the true King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16)*

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Ezra 7:10 - For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.**

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God for the example of Ezra, whose heart was set on knowing, obeying, and teaching God’s Word. Thank God for His gracious hand upon us. Ask God to help us to trust Him, to walk in obedience and to be bold in sharing the truth with others. Amen.

## Study 2 – Another Exodus

Ezra 8:1-36

*(Sermon on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025)*

**Before we begin:** What does exodus mean? Summarise what happened in the first Exodus (cf. Exodus 1-15)

*Exodus means “way out or departure or going out”*

- *God’s people, the Israelites, were slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh.*
- *God raised up Moses [who grew up in Pharaoh’s palace as a child] to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land (Israel)*
- *Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, so God sent 10 plagues to persuade them.*
- *Finally, Pharaoh let them leave.*
- *The Israelites left Egypt, but Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them.*
- *God miraculously parted the Red Sea, and the Israelites crossed safely.*
- *The waters then closed over the Egyptian army, and God's people were free.*

### Read Ezra 8:1-14

1. Why does Ezra carefully record the names and numbers of those returning?

*There are a number of reasons that Ezra carefully recorded the names and numbers of those returning:*

- *To show God’s faithfulness to **preserve a remnant** of Israel during the exile, so that they can return from exile. This means God keeps covenant with His people.*  
***Note: It has been pointed out that there were twelve lay/ordinary families who returned. This is significant. Ezra and the other post-exilic books in the Bible are anxious to see this remnant as the true heirs to God’s promises and the true inheritors of the privileges of the twelve tribes. This remnant are carrying the whole weight of God’s purposes and ultimately to them and from them is to come the Messiah (Robert Fyall – Pg 116 of The Message of Ezra and Haggai)***
- *The names are listed to **show legitimacy of lineage and identity**, especially the priestly and royal lines*
- *It shows **God is a God of order** – and that this was a deliberate, **God-ordained return from exile***

- The names listed also **honour those people who were willing to return and rebuild Israel**
- The names fall into three parts: priests (v2a); noble families /(vv2b-3a); lay or ordinary families (vv3b-14)

2. What does the list tell us about the importance of *identity* and *community* in God's people?

- *It shows that the returning Israelites belong to a covenant family, and that it is not just about individuals' faith. Likewise, we belong to a church family; a body of believers.*
- *It shows God's promises are not just to individuals; sometimes His promises are for His covenant people!*
- *It shows God works through communities with shared history and faith; as well as through individuals.*

3. What does that say about our place within the "people of God" today?

*It reminds us that we are part of God's people today and this means:*

- **Belonging to a community**, not just having a private faith. We can do church at home on our own; Christ's Church doesn't work that way!
- Our identity is found in **Christ and His Church [the body of believers]**, not just in our personal faith.
- Each of us has a **place, purpose, and responsibility** within the wider body of believers.

### Read Ezra 8:15-20

4. What's the problem in having no Levites in verse 15?

*When Ezra checked among the people and the priests, he found **no Levites!** Levites are the only ones who can serve in the Temple. Without Levites Temple worship cannot happen. See Numbers 8:14-19 - <sup>14</sup>In this way you are to **set the Levites apart** from the other Israelites, and **the Levites will be mine.***

<sup>15</sup> *"After you have purified the Levites and presented them as a wave offering, **they are to come to do their work at the tent of meeting.*** <sup>16</sup> *They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the*



firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. <sup>17</sup> Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. <sup>18</sup> And **I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel.** <sup>19</sup> From among all the Israelites, **I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tent of meeting on behalf of the Israelites** and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary.”

5. How did Ezra remedy this problem?

*Ezra identified trustworthy leaders [Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah and Meshullam,] (verse 16) and sent them to a man called Iddo, the leader in a place called Kasiphia, where Levites were likely living.*

*Ezra gave them clear instructions to ask Iddo, the leader there, to send Levites and temple servants for the house of God (verse 17).*

*As a result, God graciously provided Levites and temple servants for the journey (verses 18 to 20).*

### **Note: Difference between Priests and Levites**

*Priests: All priests were Levites, but **only those descended from Aaron** (Moses’ brother) could be priests. The priests had special authority to perform sacrifices and enter the Holy places of the Temple. Their duties: offering sacrifices on the altar, blessing the people (Numbers 6:22-27); entering the Holy Place (once per year on the Day of Atonement); teaching and interpreting the Law*

*Levites: came from the tribe of Levi; they served as assistants to the priests in the Temple. Their duties: guarding the Temple; preparing offerings; singing, playing music and leading worship (1 Chronicles 15); helping to teach the Law (2 Chronicles 17:7-9); caring for the physical needs of the Temple (cleaning, maintenance and transporting holy items for the temple.*

**All priests are Levites, but not all Levites are priests.**

6. What does that show about God's priorities in His mission?

*It shows that **God prioritizes worship, spiritual leadership, and obedience** in His mission. Returning to Jerusalem wasn't just about rebuilding the Temple; it was about restoring proper worship. To implement proper worship, it must be the Levites serving in the Temple. God provides and equips His people!*

7. How might that relate to church today?

*For Jesus' Church today; God raises up ministers and elders to ensure spiritual growth and to ensure proper worship. And God raises up fellow believers, who are like-minded, to build the spiritual life of the Church.*

### **Read Ezra 8:21-23**

8. Why did Ezra call for a fast?

*Ezra called for a fast to humble themselves before God and ask for God's protection and a safe journey (literally a straight way = Isaiah 40:3) from Babylon to Jerusalem; especially because they are an "easy target" carrying valuable temple treasures and traveling with families through hostile territory.*

9. What trust in God does Ezra show? (e.g. as opposed to asking for a military escort)

*Ezra shows deep and courageous trust in God by refusing to ask for a military escort, even though the journey was dangerous (verse 22).*

*Ezra also publicly declared that God's hand was on everyone who looks to Him, and that He protects His people*

*Ezra also chose to rely on prayer and fasting, not human power, for safety and success (verse 23) – and God answered!*

10. **Ponder:** What could we learn from Ezra here?

*We can learn several things from Ezra here:*

- *Having true faith means trusting God in real, dangerous situations – even when it's difficult times – it means backing up our words of faith, with actions/evidence*
- *Being a spiritual leader means guiding and encouraging others to put God first in their lives*
- *God honours humble trust in Him; rather than being self-reliant*

### Read Ezra 8:24-30

11. Why was so much trouble taken to guard the gold, silver and articles donated for the House of the Lord? (hint: verse 28)

*The gold, silver and articles donated to the House of the Lord were consecrated (holy, set apart) to the Lord.*

*Ezra also carefully weighed and counted the articles and then entrusted them to responsible priests, showing reverence to God and accountability.*

*This amounts to Ezra being a good steward of what God entrusted him.*

12. How might this relate to our responsibilities as “good stewards” of what God has given us?

*Just as Ezra’s group carefully handled God’s holy treasures, we are called to be faithful stewards of everything God entrusts to us—our bodies and good health; family time, gifts, money, and service.*

***"It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."***

*— 1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV)*

***"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms."*** – 1 Peter 4:10

***"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things."*** – Matthew 25:21

13. What “treasures” has God given you to guard?

*We haven’t just been entrusted with physical things: like our **loved ones, family, church family** – but also entrusted with spiritual responsibilities:*

- *The Gospel of Jesus – to learn, live and teach - “**Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you...**” – 2 Timothy 1:14*
- ***The spiritual gifts** God has given us – as above 1 Peter 4:10*
- ***Time, money and resources** – Luke 16:10-13*
- ***Good health***
- ***Being a good example for people to follow***

### Read Ezra 8:31-32

13. How is God’s protection described here?

*Verse 31 – ‘the hand of God was on us, and he protected us from our enemies and bandits along the way’*

*Verse 32 – ‘so they arrived in Jerusalem (safely)’ – a place of rest*

14. Has there been a time when you have experienced God’s hand of protection or guidance in your own “journey”? Share with your group if you are comfortable.

- *Age 3 – protected from drowning*
- *Age 33 – saved – born again*
- *Age 46 – saved from cancer and also called into ministry*
- *Age 49 – saved from cancer*

*As well as many travelling mercies; clarity when making important decisions; help when challenged emotionally and spiritually*

### **Read Ezra 8:33-36**

15. What accountability do we see here?

*Verses 33-34 - The silver, gold, and holy articles were **weighed and counted** upon arrival in Jerusalem. This shows **transparency**—everything was verified, just as it was entrusted at the start of the journey. They were also given to entrusted to trustworthy people priests and Levites.*

*Verse 36 – The exiles **faithfully delivered the King’s orders** to the royal satraps (regional Persian governors) and governors.*

16. Why did the returning exiles respond in worship?

*The returning exiles respond in worship because a) the whole point of the mission was to restore proper worship; b) to thank God for protecting them on their hazardous journey; c) they had delivered the temple articles, it’s therefore logical to worship; and d) to thank God for His faithfulness and provision*

17. For us: why should both worship and accountability be important in our service to God?

- *Proper worship keeps our hearts right towards God and we live by God’s values/rules. We need to remember that everything we have and everything we*

*do, is all to the Glory of God. Proper worship also keeps us humble, thankful and focused on God's presence and power; and not so wrapped up in ourselves*

- *Accountability keeps our actions right before God and before others. It builds trustworthiness and integrity in how we handle what God has given us. Accountability protects against carelessness, pride and misuse of our authority and responsibility. Also, accountability reflects God's character of truth and justice.*
- *When we teach or quote from the Bible, it's important we are held accountable – that what we say is actually what God says in His Word!*

18. **Ponder:** Is God calling you to trust Him for "another exodus" in your life — a step of faith, a break from compromise, a return to deeper obedience?

*As we think about future proofing church – we are stepping out in faith, trusting our plans to restore Jesus' church at Toukley are indeed God's plans!*

19. How has Ezra chapter 8 challenged you in your spiritual journey right now?

*Ezra 8 challenges us:*

- *To trust God more deeply – like Ezra, we are challenged to rely on God's protection and guidance, especially when the path ahead seems uncertain or risky*
- *To seek God through prayer and fasting – seeking Him first – showing our complete dependence on Him*
- *To live with integrity and accountability – by being good and careful stewards with what God has entrusted to us*
- *To value good spiritual leadership and living/worshipping in a faithful like-minded community of believers.*

20. How might the following New Testament passages relate to **Ezra 8**?

**Acts 13:1-3**

*In Ezra 8:21–23, the people fast and pray for protection before embarking on their journey to Jerusalem. Likewise, in Acts 13, the church fasts and prays before sending off Paul and Barnabas for ministry. Both passages show a) spiritual preparation before commencing a mission; b) seeking God's guidance and blessing before embarking; c) show a dependence on God!*

## **2 Corinthians 1:8-11**

*Ezra intentionally avoids asking the king for a military escort (Ezra 8:22) to demonstrate his trust in God's protection. Likewise, Paul describes his suffering that led to deeper dependence on God. Both passages show a) trusting God when under pressure; and b) deliverance through prayer*

## **1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

*Ezra appoints trustworthy men to guard the silver and gold for the temple (Ezra 8:24–30). Paul emphasizes the importance of faithfulness in stewardship. Both passages show a) accountability in handling what God has given us; b) integrity in leadership and c) faithfulness from those entrusted with God's resources*

## **1 Peter 2:9-12**

*The exiles returning to Jerusalem reclaimed their identity as God's holy people and a Holy remnant. Ezra's public reliance on God (not an armed escort) also served as a witness to surrounding nations. In 1 Peter, Peter says we are like the Israelites; we are a chosen people (like them). In both passages, God's people are called to be holy and live as God's people should among the surrounding pagan nations.*

## **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**

*Ezra carefully records the weights of the silver, gold and temple articles and appoints accountable men to carry them and account for them at the end of the journey. Likewise, this mirrors Paul's desire to handle financial gifts with integrity and transparency.*

## **Hebrews 11:8-10**

*Ezra and the exiles step out in faith, entrusting their journey to God. Likewise, in Hebrews, the writer uses Abraham's faith as an example. Both the exiles and Abraham make a journey of faith, in obedience to God's plans and promises. This shows: a) obedient pilgrimage; and b) Trusting God with the unknown*



What's the **BIG IDEA** of Ezra 8:1-36?

Faithful leadership and wholehearted trust in God

OR

Trusting God on the journey

OR

Worship, stewardship, and dependence

OR

God guides and provides with His gracious hand



What light globe moment did you have?

Where is **Jesus** in Ezra 8:1-36?

- a. Ezra leads people out of exile to restore proper worship and obedience to God's Law. **Jesus is a greater Ezra** – He leads His people from exile (because of sin) back into a proper relationship with God, through His life, death and resurrection
- b. Ezra trusted God's protection (not military strength). Jesus perfectly trusted His Father, even to the cross (Luke 22:42) and taught His followers to walk by faith, not by sight
- c. Ezra fasted and prayed. Jesus intercedes for us and He also prayed to fulfil God's mission (Matthew 4:1-11)
- d. Ezra was obedient and determined to get to Jerusalem; In Luke 9:51, Jesus was obedient to the Father's will and set His face towards Jerusalem (even though He knew He was going to die)
- e. Ezra set apart 12 leading priests; Jesus set apart 12 apostles. Which represents 12 tribes of Israel = God's people!
- f. The Temple always reminds us of Jesus our Spiritual Temple who makes His people Holy and we are part of His Temple, as living stones

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V22 - I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.”

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to remind us that every journey of faith begins with humble dependence on God. Ask God to help us seek Him first, to trust in His protection, and to be faithful stewards of all God has entrusted to us. Ask God to help us walk in obedience, with hearts set on worship. Amen

## Study 3 – When Compromise Costs Us: A Call to Repentance      Ezra 9:1-10:44 (Sermon on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025)

### Read Ezra 9:1-4

1. What problem is reported to Ezra? Why is this a serious problem?

***What is the problem?** The people of Israel, including priests and Levites, have intermarried with the surrounding pagan nations/tribes. They have not separated themselves from the "detestable practices" (idolatry and moral corruption) of those nations/tribes. Even the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness to God!*

*Why is this a serious problem? There are a number of reasons why this is a serious problem:*

- a. The reason that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin of Israel were originally exiled to Babylon in the first place was because they had been disobedient to God, in particular in the worship of the false gods and idols of neighbouring nations and tribes; this had led them a way from proper worship of the one true God. By intermarrying with surrounding nations, they **were repeating the sin/mistakes of their ancestors**.*
- b. The people in Ezra's time were doing the same thing and being spiritually unfaithful. They were mixing and intermarrying with the nations listed, who were known for their idolatrous worship and immoral practices, which God had specifically warned them against in Deuteronomy 7:1-4. God knew that the people of Israel would be influenced, corrupted and led astray by these nations/tribes that worship false gods. It is easier to pull a believer off a chair than to pull non-believer off the ground! We saw how King Solomon was led astray and into idolatry by having multiple foreign wives. The practices of these other nations included: worship of many gods/idols; ritual prostitution and child/human sacrifices to gain favour from these god/idols.*
- c. This intermarrying was **not an ethnic or racist issue**, but **a spiritual compromise**. It was a direct violation of God's covenant agreement with His people, in which they promised obedience. If God's people compromise their spiritual identity, they can no longer be the 'salt of the earth' or 'lights to the world' (Matthew 5:13-16).*

*d. The unfaithfulness and compromise began with the leaders and officials who were meant to guide people in holiness. Their failure set a dangerous and very poor example to the people*

## 2. What is Ezra's reaction?

*Ezra's reaction is one of deep grief, shock, and spiritual mourning:*

- *He tears his clothes – “I tore my tunic and cloak” (verse 3). This was a traditional sign of grief, outrage, or mourning, especially in response to sin or disaster.*
- *He pulled hair from his head and beard (verse 3) A more intense sign of anguish and inner torment. It shows how deeply disturbed Ezra is by the people's unfaithfulness.*
- *He sat down appalled (verse 3) Ezra is stunned and heartbroken, showing his horror at the people's sin and the potential consequences.*
- *Ezra gathered those who feared God – “Everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me” (verse 4) Those who took God's Word seriously joined Ezra in his grief and concern. Ezra is not alone in his sorrow.*
- *Ezra waited in silence until the evening sacrifice. This long pause shows a time of reflection, mourning, and perhaps prayerful preparation before addressing God and/or the people.*

## Read Ezra 9:5-15

### 3. How does Ezra approach God? What emotions stand out?

#### ***How does Ezra approach God?***

*Ezra approached God with self-abasement (belittling or humiliation of oneself), torn tunic and cloak as a sign of deep intense grief.*

*Ezra fell on his knees with his hands spread out to the Lord; this shows submission, dependence and earnest confession.*

*Ezra acknowledges Israel's past history of unfaithfulness and rebellion against God. Ezra acknowledges the guilt of the people.*

#### ***What emotion stands out?***

- *Shame and embarrassment and humiliation*
- *Grief and brokenness*
- *Fear of God and reverence towards God*

- *A heart of sincere repentance*
  - *Awe at God's mercy*
4. What does Ezra's prayer reveal about repentance and confession?
- *Ezra openly **acknowledges the seriousness of the sin of the people**. "Our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens" (verse 6). It's like the **people are drowning in their sin***
  - *Ezra's confession **involves humility and shame**. Ezra says, "I am too ashamed and disgraced... to lift up my face to you" (verse 6).*
  - *Ezra shows **repentance is both personal and corporate**. Even though Ezra personally didn't commit these sins, he uses "**we**" and "**our**", showing **solidarity** with the community. This reflects **how interconnected God's people are** and that sin affects the whole body, and confession often needs to be corporate.*
  - *Ezra's **repentance also remembers God's grace and mercy in the past**. Ezra says "You have shown us kindness... given us a remnant... revived us to rebuild Your house" (verses 8 & 9).*
  - *Ezra's **repentance trusts God's justice and righteousness**. Ezra says "You are righteous... here we are before you in our guilt" (verse 15). Ezra trusts that **God will respond justly**, whether in mercy or with discipline.*

### Read Ezra 10:1-6

5. How did the people respond to Ezra's prayer and call for repentance?
- *They joined Ezra in his grief – and they **wept bitterly** (verse 1)*
  - *They **confessed their sin** in verse 2 "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel"*
  - *They **committed to changing and expressed hope** in verse 3 "Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law."*
  - *They **took action and promised to support Ezra in this serious situation**; they said to Ezra in verse 4 "Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it."*

6. **Ponder:** Is there a place for corporate repentance and confession today?

*There is a place for corporate repentance and confession today*

- *Today, churches and Christian communities can share in sins like **complacency, division, racism, materialism, abuse of power, or failing to care for the vulnerable.***
- *The church is the body of Christ. Paul teaches that “**if one part suffers, every part suffers**” (1 Corinthians 12:26).*
- *Ezra identified with the sins of the people (even if he didn’t personally commit them), churches today can lead by confessing past and present wrongs—even those from prior generations. **This humble corporate confession is not a weakness, but shows strength rooted in the fear of God.***
- *In church history (e.g., the Welsh Revival, Korean revivals, etc.), times of revival often began through corporate acknowledgment of sin. God honors a people who humble themselves together - “**If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**” (see 2 Chronicles 7:14).*

7. What do we discover about Ezra in verse 6?

*We discover that Ezra is heavily burdened by the sin of the people. He was committed to prayer and fasting – a sign of seeking God in absolute desperation. Ezra realized that only deep dependence on God could bring about God’s help and mercy in this serious situation. We also discover that Ezra showed great leadership and wisdom; rather than rushing into things, he humbly and prayerfully sought God first. God is a first port of call; not our last resort!*

*Ezra models true godly sorrow – “Godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10)*

**Read Ezra 10:7-17**

8. What practical steps were taken to address the sin of intermarriage?

- *A **public proclamation** was issued (verses 7 & 8) throughout Judah and Jerusalem calling **all the returned exiles to assemble in Jerusalem** within three days. Anyone*



who failed to come would **lose their property** and be **excluded from the community**. This shows the **seriousness and urgency** of the problem to be dealt with

- A **nationwide assembly** was held in front of the Temple (verse 9) within 3 days and the people were greatly distressed by the situation and the rain
- The **people's sin was confronted** (verses 10 & 11). The people have been unfaithful by marrying foreign (pagan) wives and they are called to honour the Lord and do His will (not their own will!) and separate themselves from these foreign (pagan) wives. Remember it's not the fact that there are foreign (pagan) but the fact of who they worship. Obviously, if these wives forsook their false gods/idols and worshipped Israel's true God, then that would be acceptable (just like Rahab and Ruth did)
- The **people agreed with Ezra and acknowledged their sin**; but they also **asked for time to take care of this problem** – a) because of the rain; and b) this was a great sin and needed time to be taken care of properly. They **asked that leaders act for the whole assembly**
- **Ezra selected representatives to investigate** each situation so that it could be handled **properly and justly**.

9. Why was it important to have the leaders and assembly involved?

*The leaders were involved because:*

- This intermarriage was a widespread problem that affected the whole community, even the leaders. Unless this sin is dealt with by the community as a whole and made right as a community; it has the propensity to dilute the religious Judaism until it completely disappears altogether!
- It ensured accountability
- It maintained justice and order
- It modelled what true spiritual leadership should look like
- It fostered unity and corporate responsibility
- It showed genuine corporate repentance also required corporate action to be taken

**Read Ezra 10:18-44**

10. How was the issue of intermarriage investigated and confirmed?

*A thorough investigation was undertaken – case by case (verse 17)*

*If the marriage was unlawful – not just the wife was foreign/pagan but also not worshipping the Lord God of Israel.*

*The investigation began with the spiritual leaders – priests, Levites, singers and gatekeepers*

*Four priestly families [from descendants of Joshua (verse 18); descendants of Immer (verse 20); descendants of Harim (verse 21) and descendants of Pashhur (verse 22) were found to be guilty (verse 18) and they gave a pledge to put away their wives, and for their guilt they presented a lamb as a guilt offering (verse 19)*

*There were also Levites (verse 23) and musicians and gatekeepers (verse 24)*

*And also ordinary families of the Israelites from verses 25 to 44.*

*The list is like a public record and shows accountability*

*Those that were found guilty didn't just admit their fault – they made a pledge to put away their wives and offering sacrifices to show genuine repentance and obedience*

11. What does the thorough investigation tell us about the seriousness of the sin?

*This intermarriage threatened the spiritual identity and purity of God's people. If left unaddressed, it could lead to idolatry, compromise and loss of distinctiveness of God's covenant people (as happened in King Solomon's day – 1 Kings 11:1-8)*

*It shows that we are not to take God's commands lightly or flippantly.*

*Ezra and the people did not react with angry emotions or panic; they approached the issue with prayer, sorrow, fasting and structured, fair investigation bringing about genuine repentance and obedience.*

*It also shows that the leadership was accountable – and that the leaders were meant to show a holy and godly example to the people – and when leaders fall – the consequences are even more serious because they may well lead the people astray. There was also a public acknowledgement of the sin – showing truth, transparency and integrity*

12. How might this have affected families and the community?

*This would have had a devastating effect on families:*

*Families were divided with wives and children sent away (10:3, 44)*

*This would have caused heartbreak, loss and trauma for spouses and children who were uprooted or rejected. Also, their future would be uncertain.*

*Just like any marriage breakup today – it affects the parents, children, the grandparents, extended family and friends*

*For the community: It would mean the wives and children were excluded from the rest of their family and the community of God's people.*

*It may well have caused ongoing tensions between those now excluded and those remaining in the covenant people (as we see later in Jesus' time between the Jews and the Samaritans)*

*It was also a time of potential – where the Jews could return to faithful obedience to God and this could lead to a spiritual renewal/revival*

13. What does chapter 10 teach us about dealing with sin openly and honestly?

- *Sin must be acknowledged – not hidden*
- *True repentance involves sorrow AND action*
- *Leaders must lead the way in dealing with sin*
- *God's holiness demands a serious response to sin*
- *Restoration comes through obedience, even if it is painful*
- *Sin always leaves consequences (wives/children set away) even when there is repentance. This should act as a deterrent.*

14. **Ponder:** How does Ezra 9-10 relate to Christians today marrying unbelievers? (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Is it the same or is there a difference?

*2 Corinthians 6:14-18*

<sup>14</sup> *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or **what fellowship can light have with darkness?*** <sup>15</sup> *What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?* <sup>16</sup> *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."* <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the*

Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” <sup>18</sup> And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

### *1 Corinthians 7:12-16*

<sup>12</sup> To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

<sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. <sup>16</sup> How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

*Ezra 9–10 deals with the sin of intermarriage between Israelites and foreign women, which was strictly forbidden under the Old Covenant (see Deuteronomy 7:3–4), primarily because it led to **idolatry and compromise** of Israel’s identity as God’s holy people. This concern remains relevant today, but the New Testament gives a **different framework** for understanding marriage between believers and unbelievers.*

### **Similarities:**

#### *a) There is a **call to holiness and separation**:*

*In Ezra, the issue wasn’t race/ethnicity but religious loyalty/faithfulness. Foreign spouses led God’s people to worship false gods/idols as well as various abominations (ritual prostitution and child/human sacrifices).*

*Similarly, 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 warns believers: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." Paul is concerned with spiritual unity—how can light and darkness walk together? His concern was that the unbeliever might lead the believer astray.*

#### *b) The **danger of spiritual compromise**:*

*Marrying someone who does not share faith in Christ can pull a believer away from wholehearted devotion. The heart issue is the same: faithfulness to God can be undermined by close unions with unbelief. For example, a believer’s priority is to*

follow Jesus whereas an unbeliever does not have that same priority; so, sooner or later, this will lead to a problem or the temptation to compromise!

### Differences:

a) Old Covenant vs. New Covenant:

Under the **Old Covenant**, **Israel was under the Law** and the nation of Israel was not to intermarry with other ethnic nations/tribes because God knew how corrupt the other nations/tribes religious activity was.

Under the **New Covenant**, the **church is made up of people from all nations**, and the **emphasis is on faith in Christ**, not a particular nation being God's people.

b) There is a **stark difference** between the **unbelieving foreign wives of Ezra's time**, who would be worshipping false god/idols and following the detestable practices (Ezra 9:2) and **an unbeliever today**, who doesn't believe in Jesus but also doesn't follow/worship other gods/idols. The context is not the same; so we have to be careful not to make it the same.

c) **Divorce is not commanded in the New Testament:**

In Ezra 10, the people were to put away their foreign wives to restore covenant faithfulness. But in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, Paul teaches that if a Christian is married to a non-believer who is willing to stay, they **should not divorce**. Instead, the believer may have a positive spiritual influence: "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife..." (verse 14)

### **Teaching for Christians Today:**

- a. **Christians should not intentionally marry unbelievers** (2 Corinthians 6), because such a union lacks spiritual unity and may lead to compromise.
- b. However, if a believer is already married to an unbeliever, they are called to **remain faithful and loving**, unless the unbelieving spouse chooses to leave (1 Corinthians 7).
- c. The goal is **redemption, not rejection**—pointing the unbeliever to Christ through love and witness.
- d. **Whether we are talking about intermarriage (as in Ezra's time) or ANY other sin – the principle that applies is that – as Christians we need to ask ourselves – "what fellowship can light have with darkness" (1 Cor 6:14). We need to be**

*alert to situations that might put us in a position of compromise or that might lead us in the opposite direction to following Jesus!*

- 15.** How might the following New Testament passages relate to **Ezra 9 & 10**?

**1 John 1:9**

***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”***

*The people in Ezra’s time confessed their sins with sorrow and prayer, seeking purification as a community.*

*In 1 John 1:9, we are told to confess our sins and in doing so, we are assured of God’s faithful forgiveness and inner cleansing.*

*What the people of Ezra’s day sought through tears and sacrifice, we now receive through Jesus’ once and for all sacrifice.*

**Acts 3:19**

***“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”***

*Both Ezra and Acts 3:19 call for repentance and a turning back to God (which is what genuine repentance is) and the promise in both cases is that are sins will be wiped out and forgiven*

**Romans 12:1-2**

***Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

*The people in Ezra’s time had conformed to the surrounding nations’ culture through their intermarriage. The people repented and separated themselves from that. Likewise Paul calls people to be set apart (separate from the world) and live a renewed heart and mind transformed by the Holy Spirit.*



**James 4:4**

***“Friendship with the world is enmity with God.”***

*In Ezra, marrying pagan wives was a form of spiritual compromise—trying to blend faith in God with worldly alliances. James gives the same warning: spiritual compromise is betrayal of our relationship with God.*

**Romans 8:1**

***“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

*In Ezra, the people are full of grief and guilt, convicted by the breaking of God’s Law. But in Christ, Paul reminds us, we as repentant sinners, we are no longer condemned for our sins; they are confessed and forgiven and gone!*

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

***“Let us throw off everything that hinders... and fix our eyes on Jesus...”***

*In Ezra, the people “threw off” the relationships which hindered their faithful walk with God. The writer of Hebrews, today, Christians to “throw off” ANYTHING that affects our walk with Jesus and to focus on Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith!*

**Ephesians 5:25-27**

***“...Christ loved the church... to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word...”***

*Just as Ezra led the people to **cleanse the community**, this verse shows how **Christ sanctifies His people**—not by human effort, but by **His sacrificial love and the power of His Word**.*

*Jesus accomplishes the ultimate purification that Ezra only foreshadowed.*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of Ezra 9:1-10:44?

***No compromise with the world***

***OR***

***Heartfelt repentance brings restoration***

***OR***

***Sin is serious and must be repented of***



**What light globe moment did you have?**

**Ezra's discovery of Israel's sin of intermarriage reminds me of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the 10 commandments on tablets, only to discover that the Israelites have made a golden calf idol!**

Where is **Jesus** in **Ezra 9:1-10:44**?

- *Ezra, a priest, prays and intercedes for the people, confessing their sin and identifying with their guilt. Jesus always intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus is our great High Priest and the perfect mediator for us. Jesus not only identifies with our sin – but became sin and died on a cross for our sin*
- *In Ezra's time, the solution and cleansing for sin – sending the foreign wives away – was painful and imperfect. Whereas Jesus brings a better cleansing, not through separation from His people but through His blood which washes away our sin.*
- *Jesus deals with sin – fully and finally*
- *Marriage is a picture of Jesus as the bridegroom and His church as the bride.*

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Ezra 9:6 - I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.**

**Ezra 10:2 - Then Shekariah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel.**

**Finish in prayer:** Confess with humble hearts the times we have conformed to the patterns of this world and compromised on God's truth and holiness. Ask God to lead us to genuine repentance that brings healing and restoration. Thank God for His grace and mercy and patience; and His promise to restore! Amen.

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
**Toukley Presbyterian Church**  
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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Journey Through Ezra (Robert M. Solomon)

The Message of Ezra and Haggai (Robert Fyall)

The New Century Bible Commentary (D J Clines)

Matthew Henry's Commentary