

## +++ So Must We Do

### Ezra 10:1 – 44

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~ Cancer is an awful disease. It ravages the body and drains it of life. However, pathological cancer that affects our physical bodies isn't the only type of cancer that exists. There is a spiritual cancer that is eating away the life of a relationship with Christ from many, many Christians and churches today. We have multitudes on their death bed in relationship with Christ. Those churches and church members may seem like they are thriving — because wealth and the number of people who attend are deceptive — but, spiritually, they are terminally ill, and some have already lost consciousness. Well, there's only one cure for this advanced stage of malignant cancer; and Ezra is going to give us the procedure *and* the prescription in this report from our Spiritual Safari.

In our previous report – in chapter nine – we heard the beautiful prayer Ezra prayed with and for those who were with him. Those were the people who also trembled at the Word of God as Ezra did. They were trembling because of the awful spiritual condition the returning remnant was in; and because they knew how devastating the judgment of God really was. In fact, Ezra was in such shock because of the awful moral condition his people were in, that he couldn't even function properly or effectively for some period time. If you have never read the prayer of Ezra in chapter nine, I suggest you go back and do so now.

Ezra's prayer resulted in a tremendous spiritual movement at that time and a return to the Word of God. All great spiritual movements of the past have the Word of God — and prayer — fully backing them up. If there is ever to be another outpouring of revival in this world, it will have the Word of God behind it. Now, I understand that any spiritual movement that does not include the total and complete Word of God may very-well be a spiritual movement; but it isn't from above – it is from below – and that means *EVERY* single time, too. Make a note.

True and genuine revival *ALWAYS* leads to moral reformation, too. See, the problem with what we call “*revival*” in the church today is that it isn’t revival at all – not according to the Word of God. Usually, a few people get saved – and that’s great – but it’s not revival. The point of revival is to revive the church. The church today, as we should all well-know, is in a very low spiritual ebb. That realization should result in *MUCH* prayer on the part of God’s people for the restoration and reconditioning of the church – but it doesn’t seem to be doing that. I don’t mean just saying prayers, either; I mean laying hold of God in a very real way — as Ezra did....

***<sup>1</sup> Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.***

***<sup>2</sup> And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.***

~ So, there was a wave of conviction of sin that overcame God’s people as a result of Ezra’s efforts – and it was much-needed at this particular moment. Shechaniah represents the group of people who recognize their sins and desire to obey by confessing them to God; and so they did. Notice how they name their sin specifically in verse two. What they had done by intermarrying was absolutely contrary to the Law of Moses; which means they had departed from the Word of God. This convicted every single one of them. That’s when Ezra threw himself on the mercy of God Almighty and went into His presence....

***<sup>3</sup> Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.***

~ Ezra trembled at the Word of God because he didn’t just read it and forget it. Ezra’s people didn’t study it and then set it aside. They practiced

the truths and precepts of wisdom. The Word of the Lord had its way in their hearts and lives; and their realization of disobedience is heart-rending; at least, it is to me. When Ezra called attention to transgression, they didn't make excuses; they confessed immediately. This was a very serious matter, and they understood the gravity of breaking the laws of God. There was no attempt to rationalize or argue loopholes in the law; they didn't try to excuse it or cover it up. No, friends, they confessed it; and they did so in detail....

***<sup>4</sup> Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.***

***<sup>5</sup> Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.***

~ Repentance is where revival begins, friends. Repentance is for the church — not the lost man. The lost are told to believe — never repent. There is no other way in sound doctrine. First, we must walk in the light of the Word of God — which brings conviction to our hearts. When that realization is made, and we recognize we come short of the glory of God — or that we are openly transgressing that which God has written — then we will confess; which will result in *genuine* repentance. That's when the children of God can experience revival — and *ONLY* then.

The modern church is busy preaching repentance to the lost world outside; which is a tragic mistake. God isn't asking the lost world to do anything except to "*... believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" When we honestly turn to the Lord Jesus as our Savior, then something else happens; like it happened in Thessalonica as Paul said, "*... how ye turned to God from idols.*" Coming to God always comes *before* turning from idols. Repentance does not — and cannot — precede faith. That's simply impossible. Faith comes first; repentance follows — just as night follows day — it simply must be. Repentance is the cargo car pulled by the engine of faith. Now, if there's no repentance, then there was never any real saving faith. These are axioms of truth that cannot be successfully refuted in Scripture.

Repentance is one thing that is desperately lacking in the church today. God commands the churches to repent in five of the seven letters to churches in Asia Minor. See, He is talking to believers, friends, when He says, “... *lest ye repent.*” Again, repentance has nothing to do with an unsaved person. Further, if you tell an unsaved person to repent, as opposed to telling them about the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ *FIRST*, you will *NEVER* reach that person for the Lord — and you will *NEVER* have another opportunity to witness to that person, either. They will totally shut you out; because they have no capacity to repent on their own — and they know it — just like *YOU* know it. That makes you a hypocrite — and, done. Any truly born-again believer can remember how they believed first and repented later — sometimes *MUCH* later — and some cases may be immediate — but it always happens for a genuine child of God, sooner or later. The point is: that’s not our message.

Believers and the church today, in general, are utterly cold and indifferent to their fellow man. What we need is revival, but revival will not — *CANNOT* — come without repentance in the church; as in, among believers. What we see at this time in which we are studying is people turning from their indifference. Someone has said that if God would change every cold and indifferent Christian into ten blatant infidels then the church would have cause for thanksgiving and praise. The churches today are literally filled with cold and unfeeling church members. I doubt very many people in the church are even saved. If we had a true revival, cold Christians would either confess and repent and come to the Lord — or — they would leave the church. They certainly would not come back the following Sunday just to hang around....

***<sup>6</sup> Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.***

***<sup>7</sup> And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem;***

***<sup>8</sup> And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.***

~ These people were under the Mosaic Law at the time in which we are studying; and I don't suggest we attempt to enforce this type of thing today in the church. However, they were trying to separate the chaff from the wheat at this time. This three-day time frame was given to the captives who had stayed behind in Babylon because the temple and city of Jerusalem needed to be rebuilt. This was also their opportunity to come together for a time of great spiritual refreshment.

Perhaps some disagreed with the manner in which the work was taking place; maybe some people didn't like it because it wasn't being rebuilt their way — or some other objection. Well, those people were put out, friends — plain and simple. The church needs house cleaning today; but I am not talking about the members that cannot be located. I'm talking about getting rid of members who *CAN* be located. Many of those people need to be escorted to an exit. True revival would also purge out the bitterness. Bitterness is cancer — it doesn't take much to kill.

**Hebrews 12:** <sup>15</sup> *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled*  
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The Lord Jesus said, *“a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump!”* When there is a spiritual cancer threatening the life of the church, I think someone should diagnose and treat the disease. I know God wants to get rid of it. Most people think *THEIR* church is alright and unaffected by these problems; but, ask your pastor about this, and you'll discover that he has a different point of view. Just a few complainers and critics in a church can utterly stifle any potential spiritual awakening or movement in that church. So many lives have been absolutely wrecked by the bitterness of other people — mostly unsaved church members ~

***<sup>9</sup> Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.***

***<sup>10</sup> And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.***

***<sup>11</sup> Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.***

***<sup>12</sup> Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.***

~ Repentance *MUST* lead to action. There's a lot of activity labeled "action groups" where they talk about witnessing and leading. But what the church needs is to get cleaned up first. Confession needs to be made and repentance needs to become a reality — first. That would lead to a sincere interest in the Bible. A competent, educated Bible study displays genuine love amongst brethren. We'll know each other as the elect children of God if we have love one for another. This was a bitter pill for the Jews to take, but they did all the things that were asked of them. There must have been a wrenching of their hearts and tremendous agony in their souls as they came to awareness. Further, this didn't happen overnight. Suddenly, a rainstorm cropped up, and Ezra isn't going to just stand there and get wet — he tells them to come back another day so they can do this thing correctly, properly, and completely....

***<sup>13</sup> But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.***

***<sup>14</sup> Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.***

***15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.***

***16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.***

***17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.***

***18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah.***

***19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass.***

***20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah.***

***21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah.***

***22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.***

***23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.***

***24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.***

***25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah.***

***26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.***

***27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.***

***28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.***

***29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.***

***30 And of the sons of Pahathmoab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.***

***31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,***

***32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.***

***33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.***

***34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,***

***35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh,***

***36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,***

***37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau,***

***38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei,***

***39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah,***

***40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,***

***41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah,***



***42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.***

***43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.***

***44 All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.***

~ Our Spiritual Safari concludes commentary on the Book of Ezra by revealing a very sad story: some of this intermarriage had produced children. It is always the children who suffer when the parents are in sin. Well, the offerings they made speak to the fact that these people are united as one in their resolve to serve the Lord their God. What they have to do won't be easy, though. Sending away the offspring of your sins is devastatingly difficult.

In our next report, we're going to begin to consider the Book of Nehemiah; and it won't be easy, either. If we want to see revival today, we will have to read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Word of God – and it just isn't easy – because it means we will have to actually *DO* something. It takes a little effort. Most people aren't willing. Alright, I hope you can continue with us on this expedition through the entire Word of God because Nehemiah will ultimately be a very fun book to examine ~

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