

EZRA CHAPTER 10 – “PRAYER, CONFESSION, REVIVAL, REFORMATION” -- Confession of Improper Marriages -

Pagan Wives Put Away

OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – **Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221**; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

EZRA – Chapter 10

Following the prayer of Ezra, we see in verses 2-4 Shechaniah **exhorting Israel to action**. “*And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, “We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master 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. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it.”*”

God had sent a man to travel 900 miles to lead the people out of their trespass against God by taking pagan wives.

Ezr 10:10-11 *Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. [11] Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.”*

It begins with confessions and repentance! (change of mind to produce a change in direction in our lives!) Godly sorrow works repentance! Then everyone who trembled at the Word of God was to respond by entering into a covenant with God will be made! We need to fear God when we sin or when we are tempted, to have great reverence and great fear! Great fear and great grace are complimentary! Here they were trembling even at disobeying the Word of God! Repentance can be extraordinarily hard to make correction to a sinful situation. Here is a call to repentance! Words to be turned into action! Into action NOW! There is an urgency about it! The greatest single thing after love and Biblical accuracy is **clarity**! We note how clear Ezra is here (vs. 10 & 11), resulting in three actions:

Recommended response - Three actions. You’re guilty; you have sinned and trespassed against God.

- **First of all, confess your guilt.**
- **Second, do His will, pleasure. It is not a matter of is it right or is it wrong, the question is, is it pleasing to God?**
- **Finally, separate yourself from the world.**
- **Ezr. 10:12** *Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, “Yes! As you have said, so we must do.*

Ezr 10:10 *Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel.*

Ezr 10:11 *Now therefore, make confession (tôdâh, avowal, or (usually) adoration; specifically a choir of worshippers: - confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks (-giving, offering) to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will (râtsôn, delight: - (be) acceptable (-ance, -ed), delight, desire, favor, (good) pleasure, (own, self, voluntary) will, as . . . (what) would); separate (bâdal, to divide, separate, distinguish, differ, select, etc.): - (make, put) difference, divide (asunder), (make) separate (self, -ation), sever (out), X utterly) yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.”*

SEARCH ME, OH GOD (CLEANSE ME) -
J Edwin Orr – *The Kingsmen*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart today; try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me; cleanse me from every sin and set me free.
See if there be some wicked way in me; cleanse me from every sin and set me free.*

TIME LINE – BOOKS OF EZRA – (“Bible Hub” online)

537 BC	The Proclamation of Cyrus	Ezra 1
537 BC	The Exiles Return	Ezra 2
535 BC	Temple Work Begins (70 yrs. from 605BC)	Ezra 3
534 BC	Adversaries Hinder Temple Work	Ezra 4
534 BC	Artaxerxes Orders Work Stopped	Ezra 4:17
520 BC	Tattenai's Letter to Darius	Ezra 5
520 BC	Temple Work Resumed by Darius' Decree	Ezra 6
(Books of Haggai & Zechariah occur here)		
515 BC	Completion and Dedication of the Temple	Ezra 6:16
(Book of Esther occurs here)		
BOOK OF ESTHER (about 60 yrs. from 1st return)		
483 BC	Queen Vashti Deposed	Esther 1
478 BC	Esther Becomes Queen	Esther 2
478 BC	Mordecai Thwarts a Conspiracy	Esther 2:21
474 BC	Haman Seeks Revenge on the Jews	Esther 3
473 BC	Mordecai Informs Esther of Haman's Plot	Esther 4
473 BC	Esther Prepares a Banquet	Esther 5
473 BC	The King Honors Mordecai	Esther 6
473 BC	Haman Is Hanged	Esther 7
473 BC	Xerxes' Edict on Behalf of Esther & Jews	Esther 8
472 BC	Purim Instituted	Esther 9
472 BC	Xerxes' Tribute to Mordecai	Esther 10
458 BC	Ezra to Jerusalem (147 years from 605; 79 years from 1st return; 57 years from last verse of chapter 6!)	Ezra 7
458 BC	Ezra Commissioned by Artaxerxes	Ezra 7:11
457 BC	Families Return to Jerusalem with Ezra	Ezra 8
457 BC	Ezra's reforms (80 yrs. from 1 st return)	Ezra 9
456 BC	Ezra's Prayer About Inter-marriage	Ezra 10

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH (about 100 years from 1st return)

445 BC	Nehemiah's Prayer for the Exiles	Nehemiah 1
444 BC	Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem	Nehemiah 2
444 BC	Builders of the Walls Named	Nehemiah 3
444 BC	Builders Overcome Ridicule	Nehemiah 4
444 BC	Nehemiah Abolishes Debt and Bondage	Nehemiah 5
444 BC	Sanballat's Plot	Nehemiah 6
444 BC	Completion of the Wall	Nehemiah 6:15
444 BC	Census of Returned Exiles	Nehemiah 7
444 BC	Ezra Reads the Law	Nehemiah 8
444 BC	Israelites Fast and Repent	Nehemiah 9
444 BC	Israelites Seal the Covenant	Nehemiah 10
444 BC	People Settle in Jerusalem	Neh. 11, 12
432 BC	Nehemiah Restores Laws	Nehemiah 13

Kings of Persia in Ezra-Nehemiah:

Cyrus (539-530-9yrs); Darius I (522-486-36yrs); Xerxes (Ahasueres – 485-464-21yrs); Artaxerxes I (464-423-41yrs)

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

EZRA CHAPTER 10 – Confession of Improper Marriages -

Confess Their Sin

Ezr 10:1 Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly.

Ezr 10:2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this.

Ezr 10:3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Ezr 10:4 Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

Ezr 10:5 Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath.

Ezr 10:6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.

Ezr 10:7 And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem,

Ezr 10:8 and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

v. 1 The people decide to forsake their sin.*while he was confessing*: The power of Ezra's confession was not merely in the his recorded words, but it was in the *depth of heart* that brought forth the prayer, here evidence by *weeping, and bowing down....* He prayed this prayer and humbled himself on behalf of the people *publicly*, before ...*assembly....wept very bitterly*: This shows that the people were also struck by the conviction of sin and the need to confess and repent. They sorrowed over the sin of the covenant community just as Ezra had done.

v. 2 *We have trespassed against our God . . . yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this*: Shechaniah recognized the severity of their sin; yet he also knew that their present brokenness over their sin was an emblem of the work of God's Spirit among them. Thus it was reason for *hope in Israel in spite of this*.

v. 3 *Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives*: Shechaniah advised the *actions* of repentance, more than simply indulging the feelings of brokenness. *Those who have been born to them*: This was a strong command, because not only would the wives be put away - but also the *children*. Because of this, some think that this was excessive zeal in reforming, going beyond God's will and causing great harm. Yet we should see that this was in fact God's will.

v. 4 *Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you*: Shechaniah both exhorted those guilty to do what was right and stood beside them in support. This was especially meaningful because it seems that though Shechaniah was not guilty of marrying a pagan woman, both his father and his uncles were (*Ezr 10:21*).

v. 5 *Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath*: The counsel of Shechaniah seemed good to Ezra, so he immediately called upon the people to *swear an oath to do according to this word*. Significantly, Ezra *began* with the leaders; he expected them to make things right with God first.

vs. 6-7 *He ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned*: For Ezra, this who tragedy was as bad as if someone had died. He could not think of himself or his own needs when he knew God was being so greatly dishonored.

v. 8 *within three days . . . property would be confiscated, he himself would be separated...* Ezra, given great civil authority by King Artaxerxes, puts that authority to use by making the people fulfill the oath they had previously made (*Ezr 10:5*). The spirit of repentance at the assembly of the people.

vs. 1-2 Ezra's prayer was so productive! When the people saw him praying and mourning, they realized the severity of their trespass. **Only the mercy of God, the confession of sin, the sacrifice of Christ, and the grace of God could make it possible for Him to save these people, restore and revive them. God is going to do all of these things because of the prayer of Ezra.** The remnant that was there will cry out to God for mercy. When we take that position, God is ready to hear. We could expect a great revival would come to our churches today if **all God's people would humble themselves before God, confess their sins, and obey the Word of God!**

v. 3 *In Deu 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, Do have fear (tremble!) at the Word of God as being His speaking to you?"*

v. 4 We can see how Ezra's preparation of his heart to seek the law, to obey and to be able to teach it, is now to be used by the LORD to handle this delicate and difficult situation.

v. 5-7 Ezra issues a proclamation. It can be said that Ezra observed a *complete* fast, abstaining from both food and water. This same kind of fast is rare in the Bible, but was observed twice by Moses (**Exo 34:28; Deu 9:18**) and also by the people of Nineveh (**Jon 3:7**). Any man who truly sets himself 'to seek, to do, to teach' the law of God invariably brings himself into places where sorrow will be his portion, and great courage will be necessary. **Do we consider the sin of other believer in this manner as Ezra did?**

v. 8 Notice how such a man of the Word and of God quickly and firmly moves to action to correct error of trespass. How encouraging and significant.

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Ezr 10:9 So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.

Ezr 10:10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel.

Ezr 10:11 Now therefore, make confession (tôdâh, avowal, or (usually) adoration; specifically a choir of worshippers: - confession, (sacrifice of) praise, thanks (-giving, offering) to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will (râtsôn, delight: - (be) acceptable (-ance, -ed), delight, desire, favor, (good) pleasure, (own, self, voluntary) will, as . . . (what) would); separate (bâdal, to divide, separate, distinguish, differ, select, etc.): - (make, put) difference, divide (asunder), (make) separate (self, -ation), sever (out), X utterly) yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives."

Ezr 10:12 Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do.

Ezr 10:13 But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter.

Ezr 10:14 Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter."

Ezr 10:15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed (âmad, aw-mad'; to stand, in various relations: - abide (behind), appoint, arise, cease, confirm, continue, dwell, be employed, endure, establish, leave, make, ordain, be [over], place, (be) present (self), raise up, remain, repair, + serve, set (forth, over, -tle, up), (make to, make to be at a, with-) stand (by, fast, firm, still, up), (be at a) stay (up), tarry. KJV - stood (171x), stand (137x), (raise, stand...) up (42x), set (32x), stay (17x), still (15x), appointed (10x), standing (10x), endure (8x), remain (8x), present (7x), continue (6x), withstand (6x), waited (5x), establish (5x), miscellaneous (42x). Total KJV occurrences: 521) this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support.

v. 9 Ezra's appeal to the trembling assembly. *So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days:*

This was a remarkable response to the remarkable call Ezra made in the preceding verses. Their unified response was another evidence of the moving of the Holy Spirit among the people of God. *All the people sat in the open square of the house of God,* The willingness of people to forsake normal comforts and to humbly assemble in adverse circumstances was another evidence of the moving of the Holy Spirit among them.

v. 10 *You have transgressed . . . adding to the guilt of Israel:* Ezra's word to the people was clear and strong. Though the moving of the Holy Spirit was evident, it was important to carry the work through to completion and to not be satisfied with a partial work.

v. 11 *Now therefore, make confession to the LORD . . . do His will . . . separate yourselves:* This was a clear call to both *confession* and *repentance*. We separate ourselves from (external conduct and actions) by separating ourselves unto (internal, spiritual actions) Christ and following Him in Christlike living.

v. 12 *Yes! As you have said, so we must do:* This was still another evidence of the remarkable moving of the Holy Spirit upon the people. They immediately answered *with a loud voice* in agreement to what Ezra said.

vs. 13-14 *But there are many people . . . nor is this the work of one or two days:* The people asked Ezra for the *time* to make it right. This was necessary because so many people were involved in this sin; yet the principle was agreed upon with very little opposition.

v. 15 *Only Jonathan the son of Asahel . . .:* The construction of the Hebrew language is not clear. Some translate the word "*amad*" employed, stood, and some translate it opposed (stood up against).

v. 9 trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain: We see they were trembling on both the inside (spiritually) and on the outside (physically). **Is it customary for us to tremble more frequently and severely "outside" or "inside"?**

vs. 10-11 Recommended response - Three actions. You're guilty; you have sinned and trespassed against God so: **First of all, confess your guilt.** If we confess our sins, "God is faithful and just to forgive us". If you seek to cover your sins, if you seek to justify yourself, then there is no forgiveness. Forgiveness comes through an open confession; God I am guilty, I have sinned. Confession, the first step towards a renewed relationship.

Second, do His will, pleasure. It is not a matter of is it right or is it wrong, the question is, **is it pleasing to God?** In a day of changing morals, the world is sinking deeper in the mire. The morals, which generally determine the practices of a society are deteriorating year by year. **We are not to live by the morals of the society;** we are **to live by the commandments of God.** We are to do His pleasure. Does what I do please God for me to do this? **Let that be the standard for what you allow and for what you do.**

Third, separate yourself from the world. "Come apart from them and be separate," sayeth the Lord, "touch not the unclean thing and I will be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and daughters". God calls his people to be separate, to separate themselves from the world.

v. 12 *so we must we do!* Not we ought to do it. Yes, that's really what we should do. That's the problem in our Christian body and community. So often we hear these things and say we ought to do this and we talk about what we ought to do. **God help us to get to must. We must do it. If we are going to survive, we must do it.**

vs. 13-14 We must do it but give us a little time – **to be done decently and in order!** We can't just do it overnight. It's complicated, as the consequences of sin always are, therefore it will take a little time. Notice **the commitment to do it now, laying out a definite plan of action.**

v. 15 It is not clear what is meant by the word, *amad*, translated in the NKJV as "opposed" (**stood up against!**) The next verse shows *Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households, were set apart.* The KJV translates it "employed". The word is most frequently translated "stood or stand" (308X in the KJV).

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INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Ezr 10:16 Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households, were set apart by the fathers' households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

Ezr 10:17 By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives.

Pagan Wives Put Away

Ezr 10:18 And among the sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives the following were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.

vs. 16-17 Each case is examined individually over a **3 month** period. *They sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter:* Though Ezra was wisely willing to accept the delay because of necessity, he also held the assembly accountable to do what they agreed to do in the months after the great assembly. *They finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives:* The whole process took many weeks, because so many men had *taken pagan wives*. The *questioning* was necessary because they needed to examine if one of these wives had genuinely decided to serve the Lord God and to forsake her native religions. If the pagan wife had decided to keep her primary allegiance with her former people and their idols, she could not live among the covenant community and **had to be divorced**. To the end of the chapter, there is a list showing that only about 114 of these **pagan wives** refused to embrace the God of Israel and had to be divorced. It likely was less than one-half of one percent of the people who were guilty of this pagan intermarriage and who had to divorce their wives. Though it was such a small percentage, it still had to be dealt with strongly - and it was. It also shows that most of the foreign wives probably joined the people of God in their heart as well as their home. In the New Testament believers are also instructed to marry within the faith. Marriages to unbelievers are condemned (**2Co 6:14**) and widows (as one example of the unmarried) are directly commanded to marry within the faith (**1Co 7:39**). However, Paul specifically commanded that if a believer is married to an unbeliever, they are to remain in the marriage if at all possible, both for the possibility of a witness to the unbelieving spouse and for the benefit it brings to the children (**1Co 7:12-17**).

v.18-44 The list of those found guilty. *And among the sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives the following were found:* Those who had to put away their wives (because they refused to convert) are here listed. This is a somewhat shameful list, and not a very good way to get one's name recorded in the best selling book of all time. No one was exempt from the reformation, which was carried out with complete thoroughness. Such action results in the true outcome, and only satisfactory expression, of sorrow over sin. So important to the new community was the whole procedure, that the names of the implicated ones were chronicled, and immortalized in connection with this sad affair. Ezra embodied the list in his own book as a testimony of his care for Israel, and here it still stands, a monument of his fidelity to the people of his God.

vs. 16-17 Sin and trespass always creates a complicated and messy problem. Notice although they are moving quickly it still took three months of meeting with each of the situations to straighten out this problem.

v.18 Ezr 10:18-44 indicate that **seventeen priests, ten Levites, and eighty-seven other men** were found guilty of marrying heathen wives. Jeshua was the high priest and even his own sons were guilty of this sin. The Bible says, “the time has come when judgement begins at the house of God,” but if it begins here, what is going to happen to those who are really out in the sin? It is frightening to find priests deliberately disobeying God, for when the spiritual leaders are backslidden, what can we expect of the rest of the people? **So thorough was the investigation that even the heathen children were exposed and expelled.** Most likely, the Jewish husbands and fathers made provision for the welfare of these expelled people, but they were to live with them as husband and father no more.

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INTERPRETATION

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Ezr 10:19 And they gave their promise that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering.
Ezr 10:20 Also of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah;
Ezr 10:21 of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah;
Ezr 10:22 of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasa.
Ezr 10:23 Also of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.
Ezr 10:24 Also of the singers: Eliashib; and of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.
Ezr 10:25 And others of Israel: of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Jeziah, Malchiah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah;
Ezr 10:26 of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Eliah;
Ezr 10:27 of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza;
Ezr 10:28 of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai;
Ezr 10:29 of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Ramoth;
Ezr 10:30 of the sons of Pahath-Moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh;
Ezr 10:31 of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
Ezr 10:32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah;
Ezr 10:33 of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei;
Ezr 10:34 of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel,
Ezr 10:35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluh,
Ezr 10:36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
Ezr 10:37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasai,
Ezr 10:38 Bani, Binnui, Shimei,
Ezr 10:39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,
Ezr 10:40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,
Ezr 10:41 Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,
Ezr 10:42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph;
Ezr 10:43 of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.
Ezr 10:44 All these had taken pagan wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

v. 19 *They presented a ram of the flock:* This may show that they sinned without knowledge because for a sin of ignorance the offering was not a ram, but a goat. (*Lev. 5:15*)

vs. 20-22 On the priestly families of Immer, Harim, and Pashur

v. 23 The names of the Levites.

v. 24 The names of the singers.

vs. 25-43 the names of non-official or ordinary Israelites, *others of Israel* — That is, of non-official or simple Israelites, as distinguished from the priests, Levites, and singers just mentioned. The names of the chief fathers of this list are all found in the list of those who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, chap. 2. The Bani of Ezra 10:34 is not to be identified with the Bani of Ezra 10:29. The latter is probably the Bani of Ezra 2:10, while the other is, perhaps, a corruption of Bezai, (of Ezra 2:17,) or possibly the name of some person not mentioned at all in the list of chapter 2

v. 44 *All these had taken pagan wives:* As seen before, the greater problem was that these wives *remained* pagan and refused to join the covenant community. Their break with the people of Israel was grounded in *faith*, not in *race*. Let us at least separate ourselves after the manner of Christ, who frequented the temple, acknowledged the State, accepted invitations to great houses; but his heart and speech always revolved about his Father. *Some of them had wives by whom they had children:* It seems that most of their wives were barren; which came to pass by God’s special providence, partly to manifest His displeasure against such matches, and partly that the practice of this great and necessary duty might to be encumbered with too many difficulties. Ezra here disappears from the Biblical record for about thirteen years, when he appears again in the Book of Nehemiah. His passion then was the same as it was at the end of the Book of Ezra: to transform the people of God by bringing them the Word of God

vs. 19-43 *And they gave their promise that they would put away their wives,....* They proposed to do it, and actually did it: *and being guilty;* of which they were fully convinced: *they presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering;* to make atonement for it, and thereby set an example to others to do the like. From here, to the end of *Ezr 10:43*, is a list of the men that had married strange wives, and put them away. those in *Ezr 10:20*, were priests; in *Ezr 10:23*, Levites, and those of them who were singers or porters; the rest were Israelites: and it is a very common distinction, in rabbinical writers, to distinguish the Jews into priests, Levites, and Israelites; of these we know no more than their names; some of the heads of the families may be observed in *Ezr 2:1*.

v. 44 *All these had taken pagan wives,....* In all about one hundred and thirteen: *and some of them had wives by whom they had children;* and yet they put them away, which made it the more difficult for them to do; and those that had none, which many think to be a mark of God's displeasure at such marriages. No mention being made of the children being put away, as Shechaniah proposed, *Ezr 10:3*, it may be concluded they were not, but were taken care of, to be educated in the true religion, and entered proselytes at a proper time. We have no record of Ezra giving orders to have them put away, *Ezr 10:11*. **Even though the problem was dealt with directly, it would eventually reappear (cf. Neh. Ezr 10:9-10; 13). The best reformers can but do their best efforts to turn away from trespass, but, when the Redeemer Himself shall come to Zion, He shall effectually turn away ungodliness from Jacob.**

How long did this reformation last? **About twenty-five years later, Nehemiah faced the same problem (Neh 13:23).** It was a repeated sin and required repeated discipline. This corrective action worked for that generation, **but we see the need for every generation** to be reminded to do the same thing! **God’s servants must “watch and pray” if the work of God is to prosper.**

God’s servants, indeed, must “watch and pray” if the work of God is to prosper. **May we commit to follow Jesus Christ; to live to please Him. We must cleanse our house from the defilement of the world and live a separated life unto God. A life that pleases Him!**