



Ezra 9-10

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Tape #7148
By Chuck Smith

Before Israel ever became a nation and were established in the land, God warned them that if they should turn away from him and if they would follow after the gods of the people around them that they would be dispersed by God from the land that he had given to them. So they were commanded by God, when they came into the land, not to make any marriages or alliances with the inhabitants of the land lest their hearts would be driven to worship the gods of the people of the land. It was for their abomination that God was driving them out.

The children of Israel came into the land that God had promised them. They became a great nation and were blessed of God but they had a problem, an attraction towards evil. An attraction towards the gods of the Amorites and the Moabites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Canaanites. These gods were the gods of pleasure; the gods of power the gods of the intellect.

The prophets of God came to the people of Israel and they warned them unless they would turn away from their abominations, from their evil practices, from the worship of these false gods, that God would judge them and they would be driven from the land. Jeremiah and Isaiah began to prophesy that the time has come when God is going to dispossess you out of this land, that the Babylonians would be the instrument that God would use to chastise his people for their turning their backs upon God. Jeremiah prophesied that they would be carried away to Babylon where they would live for seventy years in bondage and slaves to the Babylonians because they had turned their backs upon God.

Even as God warned, the nation of Israel was defeated by the Babylonians, the Nation of Judah the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon and for seventy years they existed as slaves in Babylon. After seventy years, God's mercy and grace was extended to them. According to the prophecy of Isaiah, God raised up a king on the throne, his name was Cyrus. Cyrus issued the decree that allowed the Jews, all who wanted of their own freewill, the return to the land of Israel, to build again their temple and to worship again their God in the land that he had given to their fathers.

There was a great number, close to fifty thousand, men with their families that came back to the land who began the rebuilding of the temple and who then, in having completing the task, offered the sacrifices and reinstated the worship of God in the temple in Jerusalem.

Fifty seven years after they had rebuilt the temple and dedicated, king Artaxerxes heart was moved to make another decree that Ezra might lead a new contingency of Jews back to Israel, so sort of a second wave of people returning. Ezra was given orders, by the king, that he was to be one of the leaders that he could execute judgement as a governor in the land. He was to see that the righteous standards of God were maintained within the land. He had the power of capital punishment to those that would violate the laws of God. Ezra came back after a four month journey to the land of Israel with that contingency that came with him. He had brought back great wealth with him and great authority from the Persian king.

Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have

mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass (9:1-2).

Ezra has established back there and suddenly they had come to him with this shocking news. The priests, the Levites, the rulers, have not obeyed the commandment of God. The commandment that they were to be separate people, that they were not to be joined unto the nations that inhabited the land before them. In direct disobedience to the commandment of God, they began to marry into the inhabitants of the land, taking the daughters of the Canaanites and so forth for their sons, giving their daughters to them. They began this mixture, this interracial marriage.

Let me say at this point that the Bible really does not condemn interracial marriages. We are all of Adam and of Adam's seed. God only prohibited it for the Nation of Israel. It is not a general prohibition. It was something God had ordered for the Nation of Israel because promised that through Abraham and through the seed of Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed. Until the coming of Jesus Christ, it was necessary to preserve that seed of Abraham. God promised to David that, "there shall never cease from thy seed one sitting upon the throne". For the Nation of Israel, it was a commandment not to mix. Interracial marriages were forbidden for the Nation of Israel in a general sense.

It was not something that was a total black and white, "you're out" if you violate. For David's great grandmother was Ruth, the Moabite. There were those, Moses himself took a wife who was Ethiopian. There were individuals but never general intermarrying. God was keeping a pure line to the Messiah but God knew that if they began intermarrying into the people of the land of Canaan, that they would be soon introducing through these marriages the abominations of the worship practices of the Canaanites.

The Canaanites worshiped the Ashram, which was their form of pornography, sexual licentiousness involved in the worship of the Asshurim. They worship the flesh, the worship pleasure; they worship the gods of power. They worshiped these gods in all kinds of licentious sexual orgies. Thus, God wanting to keep his people pure and holy, had forbid the general practice of intermarriage with the nations that inhabited the land of Canaan prior to them coming in.

God's purpose for the prohibition was two fold. That they would not bring this kind of idolatry right into their homes through the marriages. Here you have a daughter in law from the Canaanites and she comes into her home and brings with her her little Asshurim, her little gods. She brings with her her practices of worship. She introduces them into the home; a home has become defiled. Israel did not obey God. They began to worship the gods of the people of the land around them in the ruins of the houses of Jerusalem, the houses that were destroyed by the Babylonian army. They have recently been doing a lot of archeological excavations there on the Hill of Offal, the city of Jerusalem, at the time of the Babylonian invasion. In each of the houses, they have found multitudes of these little idols, these statues, and these images. They had become a household item to the people of Israel. For this cause, the judgement of God came. For this cause, they were carried away as captives to Babylon.

God has been gracious to them, they have returned from their captivity, but what do they do? Within fifty-seven years they are reverting back to those same practices for which their fathers had brought the wrath of God upon the nation. They have begun again the intermarriages, which led to their practicing of the abominations of the heathen around them. Through these marriages and intermarriages with the pagan nations around them, they became corrupted. The very thing that God knew the marriages would produce was produced.

And when I heard this thing, I rent [tore] my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished [shocked] (9:3).

Just sitting there staring. As we mentioned this morning, the tearing of ones clothes was the method by which they showed extreme emotion, usually the emotion of grief. To express the deepest feelings of grief they would just rip their garment. They would also do it to express extreme anger or consternation. With

Ezra, I think, it was probably a combination of the three, upset, filled with consternation, grieving over the falling of the people. He went a step further and pulled out his hair and plucked out his beard.

Many times, in that oriental culture and even to the present day, when they are going through a period of grief and there has been a death in the family, they will shave their heads and then for a period of time not cut their hair at all, just let their hair and beards grow for a period of time. They began this Nazarite vow by the shaving of their heads. It's done quite often when there is a death of a close member of the family.

Ezra, showing his great grief and his total shock and amazement that the people would so soon turn back to these practices that had caused the destruction of the nation to begin with. He sat down astonished thee in the temple courtyard.

Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, (9:4).

There were that faithful remnant that trembled at God's word, who feared the word of God and who sought to obey the word of God. Hearing of Ezra sitting there, word got around Jerusalem, so they gathered together with him.

because of the transgression of those that had been carried away: and I sat astoned until the evening sacrifice (9:4).

Sort of in a catatonic state, he just sat there starring.

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God (9:5).

Get a picture of this man now. The time of the evening prayers and sacrifices have come. He has been sitting there all day, dazed and shocked, astonished by what the people had done. Now he gets on his knees, his clothes are torn and his hair has been plucked out. He raises his hands to the Lord God of Heaven.

And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: (9:6).

Jeremiah, who was one of the prophets before the captivity and was prophesying during the time they went into the captivity, as he was talking of the sins of the people that perpetrated, brought on the captivity in telling of the things they were doing he says, "and neither are they ashamed". Then later he said, "They do these things and they don't even blush". Ezra, no doubt, was familiar with the prophecy of Jeremiah, as was Daniel. It was a popular book during the captivity. It became a bestseller among the Jews because they realize that Jeremiah was indeed speaking to them the word of God. His prophecies came to pass so accurately. Ezra, having knowledge and being familiar with the prophecy of Jeremiah where Jeremiah was speaking of how these people were doing these shameful things but they weren't really embarrassed by it, they weren't blushing, they weren't ashamed. He said, "God, I'm ashamed, I blush".

In the New Testament there is a word, wantonness. Wantonness is that person who can do the most horrible defiling acts of sin without any shame, who sort of flaunts the fact that they do it. It is the flaunting of a person's sin that the Bible terms wantonness. Illustrated in our society today in the marches of the homosexuals and lesbians down the street, that is wantonness, that is not showing any shame for their violation of God's law but sort of flaunting the fact that they dare to violate the laws of God and nature. "God, I'm ashamed, I blush to lift up my face to thee O God".

for our iniquities are increased over our head, (9:6).

That is, they have risen until we're drowning in them. They have overwhelmed us, they are overflowing.

and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens (9:6).

It has come before you; you are aware God of our trespasses and our iniquities. Notice he doesn't use the word sin. Sin is a missing of the mark but quite often it's not deliberate or willful. Quite often it is being a

poor shot, a weakness. Trespass is a deliberate, willful violation of the law of God. An iniquity is the sum of the sins and trespasses. He confesses the iniquity and the trespass.

Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day (9:7).

God, you brought severe judgement upon us, you brought the sword upon us, and you brought upon us the judgement as we were carried away captives, as we endured such severe persecution and slavery because of our iniquities and our trespasses.

It must be noted that, though Ezra himself was not personally guilty of this particular sin, yet he identifies himself with the people in his prayer. In his prayer he uses the personal pronoun, "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God, for our iniquities". He wasn't saying they did this and they did that, he's saying our and we and us and my.

There is a saying; "in order for evil to triumph all is necessary is the good people do nothing". Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth. If the salt has lost its savor it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of man". For a long time in our nation we have been gradually going down hill. For the most part, the church has remained silent. A phrase was coined to express the lethargy of the people of the United States; it was "the silent majority". I do believe that the silent majority does exist. I do believe that the majority of the people of the United States are appalled at what's going on. I believe that the majority of the people of the United States are opposed to our children being exposed to all kinds of pornography when they go to the store to buy a loaf of bread for their mother. They're opposed to the children being exposed to this terrible violence that is on TV, especially on Saturday morning.

Back in April CBS, on the Mighty Mouse show, showed Mighty Mouse in an emergency sort of lethargic and unable to do anything and so he snorted some coke and then he's off on his way to rescue the situation. It's no wonder, the man who is now writing the Mighty Mouse series for CBS is the man who is actually one of the lead writers of the pornographic films. CBS thought he would be good for the children's program, help form their little minds to make them feel that coke snorting is something that will pick you up and help you be a hero.

What do we do? We sit back; we buy the General Food and the Nabisco products, who sponsor this kind of destruction of the minds of our children. Because we support the institutions we have to share in the guilt of what's being done. AT&T sponsors a blasphemous film on television that just makes the Bible look ridiculous and those who believe in the Bible as a bunch of half-witted people and yet we continue to use AT&T as our long distance carrier. It's not as though we didn't have an alternative. When we support those institutions that blaspheme our Lord, that tear down the morals of our nation, than we become contributors and we become guilty ourselves. It's because we haven't stood up, it's because we have been the silent majority and haven't spoken out, that evil is allowed to continue to grow and to spread its tentacles through our entire society.

The Supreme Court opened the door for pornography; we didn't do anything about it. Only a few voices hear and there that were quickly silenced because the enemy, in his opposition, is very loud and very vocal. Having opened the doors to pornography, arousing the emotions through the songs and the lyrics that we allow our children to listen to on the Rock Music, filthy and Christ-less groups advocating the kids to get into all kinds of sex, kinky and otherwise. We've allowed it to happen and as a result, these kids have their emotions stirred long before they are capable of handling these passionate feelings. Without really the maturity of good judgement, children are becoming involved in sexual activities and mothers advising their daughters in the use of the pill, prophyllactics. Children being immature as they are, we suddenly have millions of pregnancies, unwanted children. So the court that opened the door for all of this to happen opened the door again in order that women might be able to get abortions. Children, without even the knowledge or

consent of their parents, can get an abortion though they can't get their ears pierced. All in the name of freedom.

“O God our iniquity has risen over our heads, our trespasses are as high as the heavens” and Ezra accepts his responsibility and identifies himself with those who have sinned. It is interesting, if you read in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, a prophet in exile and in Babylon, as Daniel begins to seek the Lord and as Daniel begins to pray, he begins to confess the sins of the nation but he puts himself in it; Lord, we have, it's our and it's we. He takes the share of the responsibility for what's happened to the nation and to the condition of the nation. He bears also the responsibility of it.

I think that too often we say “O Lord, they, they, they”. We don't realize or we don't face the fact that they wouldn't be able to do it unless I supported them. Now the ultimate blaspheme, this film, “The Temptation of Christ” by Universal. If the Christians don't rise up at this point it's all over, we're gone. This is the ultimate blaspheme. If we just sit by and let this happen but as I pointed out this morning, you that are using the products of the MCA corporation, the parent company of Universal, you that have been going to the movies and supporting this godless industry, you are the ones that provided the funds for the making of this blasphemous film and you cannot escape the responsibility that you are partially responsible that this has happened. I am partially responsible for these things that has happened. We have sinned. Our iniquities are over our head; our trespasses have reached into the heavens.

“America, America, God shed his grace on thee.” America has turned its back upon God. Our children are allowed to be exposed to all kinds of blaspheme within the classrooms, sex education. A classroom of kindergartners here in Orange county were taken to the drug store and shown how to by prophylactics and which department they exist. America, America, God help us.

Ezra said, “Lord your hand of judgement has been upon us, the sword, the captivity, because the iniquities that we, our kings, our priests have committed. We've been delivered to the hands of the enemies who have spoiled us, taken us captive”.

And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, (9:8).

That is, when we come back, a place to hang our coats or hats, we've got a nail in this holy place.

that our God might lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage (9:8).

God you were good to us. You're grace and mercy were bestowed, you've allowed some of us to comeback to start afresh, to start anew, to start over again.

For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this: for we have forsaken thy commandments (9:9-10).

Here they are, the leaders, the priests, the Levites and the people they are back doing the very same thing for which the judgement of God came upon them. What shall we say after this?

God I don't know what to say, I have no words, I'm at that point of total frustration for we have forsaken your commandments. God you gave us another chance in your mercy and in your grace you gave us another chance, a reviving. You brought back something that was dead; you gave us a second chance. What have we done? We've gone right back out and committed the same evils, the same trespasses.

Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness (9:11).

God said you're going into a corrupt hole. The land is filled with filthiness and abominations.

Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever (9:12).

This is what you told us.

And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this: Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? (9:13-14).

God you would be just in wiping us out completely, not leaving a soul.

O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: (9:15).

You're hand of judgement has not yet fallen. God you're so good not to have wiped us out completely already.

behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this (9:15).

God, here we are. He is casting himself upon God at this point, not arguing, not justifying himself, not trying to give excuses which we are so prone to do. He just says, We're guilty. God we deserve whatever you send. You have been good to us and you haven't really punished us as much as we deserve. The very fact that we are still existing is a demonstration of the mercy and grace of God, the longsuffering of God, the patience of God. Be sure of this, God's judgement does not linger.

God is going to judge this nation. Even as the sins of Sodom rose up to heaven until they forced God to destroy them, so has the sins of America have risen up to heaven. The time is coming very soon and God is going to bring the nation down. I do believe that even as the angels came down to Sodom and delivered Lot out of the city before the fiery wrath of God came upon it, that the Lord is going to descend from heaven with the voice of the arch angel and trump of God. We who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be to the Lord. I believe that there is a hope for the child of God; the hope of the rapture of the church. I believe that what is happening today is something that should awaken every saint of God to realize time is short. The time for judgement has surely come. Even as when the angels were leading Lot out they said, "Hurry, get out of here quickly, we cannot destroy this place until you are out," I believe the Lord is going to take quickly, "in a moment in a twinkling of an eye" his church out of this world and then shall God's judgement fall.

Jesus said, "Pray ye always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things," talking about the judgement, "and to be standing before the son of man".

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, (10:1).

He is now weeping and throws himself before God there before the altar of God, 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 ver sore (10:1).

The sense of guilt came upon them; they're awful sin.

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 (10:2).

It's not over yet. It's not lost yet.

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 (10:3).

Let's make a covenant with God. Let's start by saying let's put away these wives; we're going to be separate. We're going to separate ourselves from the world.

Christian friend, I believe the time has come when we need to make a covenant with God of separating ourselves from the world, from the pollution and the defilement of the world. I'm going to separate myself from the worldly things, those things that tear down and defile. I won't support the movie industry and I won't support those companies that are sponsoring the corrupting things.

I would suggest that someone go through Playboy magazine and find out who is sponsoring that magazine except I wouldn't wish that on anybody to look at that thing. By buying the products of the companies that are paying advertising to these magazines actually in a secondary sense, you are supporting the pornographic industry. Man, that doesn't leave us much does it? It leaves us Jesus. You can drink water. It would be better for you anyhow.

Let's make a covenant with God. We're going to separate ourselves; we're going to make a clean break, a new break. It's severe? Yes, very severe. It's harsh? Yes, it's very harsh. Yet it's necessary if we are to survive.

Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it (10:4).

Again Ezra had been commissioned by the king to come back and to oversee the nation and to see that the law of God was practiced. So he said, "That's in your jurisdiction man. Go ahead, do it and we will be with you. Be of good courage, let's do it".

Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. And they sware (10:5).

Okay fellas, this is it.

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. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem. And that whosoever would not come within three days, (10:6-8).

That's not too harsh. The furthest place at that time was forty miles. They had not really taken back all of the land. They were just living from the area of Benjamin which was Ramalah on down to Beersheba in the south and from Jericho to the Mediterranean.

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 (10:8).

You've got three days to get here, if not, your goods would be taken away, your house will be taken away and you will be separated from the people of God. You'll be excommunicated.

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; (10: 9).

The ninth month roughly corresponds to our month of December. So it was close to the Christmas season. In Jerusalem in December is when they get so much of their rain. Jerusalem gets cold in the wintertime when it rains.

and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, (10:9).

Around the outer court there in the house of God.

trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain (10:9).

They were there getting soaked. They were trembling partially because of the severity of issue and partially because of this rain.

And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto the, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 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 (10:10-11).

Three actions. You're guilty; you have sinned and trespassed against God so first of all, confess your guilt. Always, the Bible tells us that 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. Don't try to tell God how good you are. Remember how Jesus spoke about the two men who went into the temple to pray? The Pharisee, as he stood there said, "God, I thank you that I'm not like other men for I pay my tithes and I do my little thing and Lord, I am not like that wicked fellow over there". He presented himself to God. Jesus said the other fellow being public and a noted sinner wouldn't even as much as lift his head toward heaven. Just with bowed head, smote on his chest, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner". Jesus said, "I tell you he went away justified whereas the other one went away bearing his guilt". Confession, the first step towards a renewed relationship.

Second, do his pleasure. It is a matter of is it right or is it wrong, the question is, is it pleasing to God? We are living in a day of changing morals as far as the world is concerned as they are sinking deeper in the myriad. And 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. The question is not whether it is right or it's wrong, does it please God for me to do this? Let that be the standard for what you allow and for what you do.

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

Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, as thou hast said, so must we do (10:12).

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.

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 (10:13).

We must do it but give us a little time. We can't just do it overnight.

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 (10:14).

Let's go ahead and start action now.

Only Jonathan the son Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 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 manes, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month (10:15-17).

It was determined to take this course of action. So the tenth month roughly corresponds with our January. On January the first, the tenth month and the first day, they sat down to work out the program by which they're going to deal with these issues and be separated from the world. On the twentieth day this whole assembly took place and now on the first day of the month of January are they determined to start taking the action.

And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. (10:18).

Now 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, man what is going to happen to those who are really out in the sin?

As it was reported to Ezra, the priests and chief rulers were actually the leaders in this whole thing. It is interesting that at least, first of all it lists the priests and those that were guilty from the priestly families and being guilty these priests offered a lamb of the flock for their trespass. Then after naming the sons of the priests, it names the Levites that were guilty, verse twenty-three. Verse twenty-four, those who were employed in the worship of the temple, the singers. It names those from the temple employees, the singers and all that were guilty. Then of the families of Israel, beginning with verse twenty-five and going to the end of the chapter.

These names are the infamous names of the violators. Recorded that through all history their sin might be exposed. These are the guilty culprits. O thank God he doesn't do such practices today. Their names have been recorded and probably the purpose of it being to put them to open shame for their trespass.

All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children (10:44).

But the determination to confess, to seek to please God and to separate themselves and they averted the judgement of God because God is gracious and God is merciful.

Shall we pray?

Father we thank You for Your grace and mercy towards us. Lord, we confess our guilt before You tonight. Lord we have sat by and allowed these things to happen and didn't even lift a finger to write a letter of protest. We are guilty as the silent majority of being silent, not even getting out to the polls to express our consternation over the things that are happening. Lord, we've allowed evil men to take control in so many areas. We've allowed Lord the moral morass. God, we're guilty. We have sinned. Lord, we want to make a covenant with You tonight that we will begin to live a life that pleases You. That we will separate ourselves from the world, from the pollution, the defilement of the world. We'll separate ourselves from those kinds of videos and all that corrupt our morals. The type of music that would brake down our inhibitions. God we are going to live a life of separation in the evil world around us that we might be Your people and You might be our God and that we would be Your sons and daughters. So that when You come to take your children to the place of refuge before Your wrath is poured out that we would be gathered together unto thee in that day. O Jesus, help us that we will be accounted worthy to escape the things that are coming upon this world that we might be standing before You on that great day. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

It comes down to you, your personal relationship with God, and your personal commitment to him. But as Elijah stood before the people and said,

“Choose this day who you will serve, if Baal, Molech, or Mammon be God, then serve them. But if Jehovah is God, then serve him. Commit yourself because you can’t serve two masters. You’ll either hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.”

“As for me and my house we’re going to serve Jehovah”. We are going to follow Jesus Christ, we are going to live to please him, we’re going to cleanse our house from the defilement of the world and we are going to live a separated life unto God. A life that pleases.