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9 When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ²For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of *those* lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass." ³So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished. ⁴Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.
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1. Set worship, but not a set people

- a. Ezra had come to Jerusalem to reestablish proper worship of God
 - a1. No mention of the High Priest in Jerusalem
 - a2. From the beginning Ezra had trouble recruiting Levites & Nethinim to come with him
 - a3. Once Ezra arrived, he set the worship in order, both according to the Law of Moses & the command of King Artaxerxes
- b. A new revelation came to Ezra 5 months after arrival
 - a1. The leaders, priests, & Levites had married pagan women
 - b1. These are not only foreign women, but idol worshipping women
 - b2. Rahab & Ruth were foreign women, but they had come to faith
 - a2. Nehemiah dealt with the same issue (13)
 - b1. He pointed out that Solomon had committed the same sin, causing Israel to become idolatrous
 - b2. Their children could not even speak Hebrew
 - a3. Why it took 5 mo. to discover this is unknown, but if Ezra had concentrated on the FORM & FUNCTION of worship without considering the FOCUS of worship, he may have missed it
- c. The Jews were to be a separate people
 - a1. They were supposed to marry within own tribe

- a2. They were not allowed to marry pagans
- d. Both the Abrahamic Cov. & Mosaic Cov. required the Jews to remain a separate people

- a1. It was hard enough to keep Israel spiritual
- a2. Mixing of the race would lead to assimilation into the majority pagan culture

2. Ezra's strong reaction

- a. Ezra tore his robe & plucked out his own hair & beard
 - a1. Tearing robe was a sign of humiliation & grief
 - a2. Unique: tearing out own hair (Neh. tore out hair of transgressors [13:25], Ezk. shaved his head; Jesus had his beard plucked out [Is. 50])
- b. Ezra sat astonished all afternoon
- c. Those who loved God gathered to him
 - a1. Mingling with pagans caused the exile
 - a2. They had learned very little of nature of God

3. Ezra's prayer (9:5-15)

- a. Ezra offered a prayer of contrition on behalf of Israel
- b. Ezra's prayer admits both guilt & deserving of judgment
 - a1. Shame & humiliation due to guilt of sin
 - a2. Captives had committed the same sins
 - a3. God had shown grace so revival could come
 - a4. God had moved the Persian kings to show mercy to Jews to send them to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple & the walls of the city
 - a5. They have directly violated the laws against Israel giving their children to marry pagans (Dt. 7)
 - a6. Ezra admits that the same sin that led to the exile would bring the same results now
 - a7. Ezra bemoans that they are but a small remnant, so judgment would finish them
- c. Ezra's prayer is of confession, but he does not ask for forgiveness, for he knows that repentance must come 1st
 - a1. Ezra goes into action to correct the problem
 - a2. Ezra changes to situation, but can't change the hearts of the people (must be done by them)
- d. Rev. 2:1-5 the Ephesian church had a similar problem
 - a1. They had all the right forms of worship & were particular about the doctrines they allowed to be taught, but they had left their first love
 - a2. Outward adherence to teaching of Word is not the same as commitment to honoring the Lord
- e. Relationship with God = different than rule keeping