

Rebuilding What Was Lost
The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah



Rebuilding What Was Lost

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*
- *Letters to Kings*
- *The Return of the Heroes*
- *After “The End” (part 4)*



After “The End”

- Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem
 - Everyone was doing it right at the end of Chapter 8
 - But then what happened in Ezra 9:1-2?
 - How could they have done this when God had so clearly commanded them not to back in verses like Deuteronomy 7:1-4?



After “The End”

- Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem
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 - But then what happened in Ezra 9:1-2?
 - What was Ezra's reaction in Ezra 9:3-4?



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 - But then what happened in Ezra 9:1-2?
 - What was Ezra's reaction in Ezra 9:3-4?
 - How did Ezra pray in Ezra 9:5-7?
 - What happens when an entire community actually owns and commits to solving an issue? (without the leaders trying to—even arguably justifiably—remove themselves from blame)



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 - What was Ezra's reaction in Ezra 9:3-4?
 - How did Ezra pray in Ezra 9:5-7?
 - What did Ezra focus on in Ezra 9:8-12?
 - How important is it to actually *follow* the stuff that God says to do (and *not* to do)?
 - Even the arguably little, non-“cardinal sin” kinds of stuff?



- How can it really be a sin to want to make peace with your neighbors?
- How can it really be a sin to love the “wrong” person?
- How can it really be a sin to eat the “wrong” fruit?
- What are we expecting to grow when we plant something that God has told us not to in our lives?



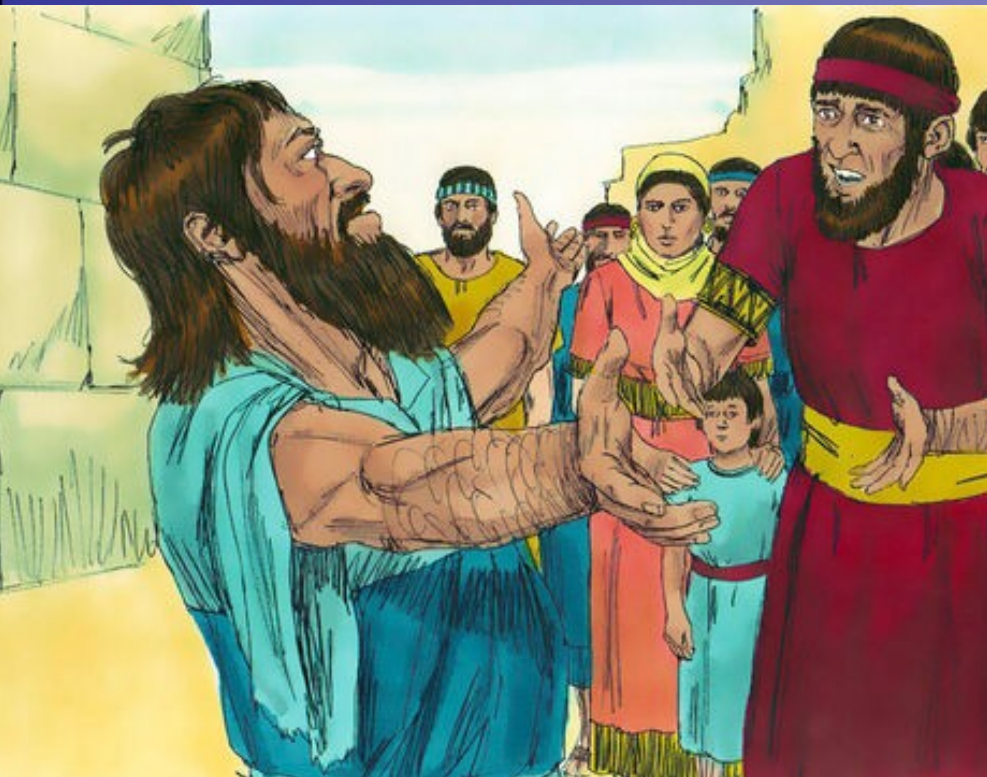
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 - What did Ezra focus on in Ezra 9:8-12?
 - Please read Ezra 9:13
 - How is this the Gospel message in a nutshell?



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 - What did Ezra focus on in Ezra 9:8-12?
 - Please read Ezra 9:13
 - Please read Ezra 9:14-15
 - What exactly is Ezra saying in verse 14?
 - How is this a conundrum for them?
 - So what can they do to get right with God again?
(HINT: you have to uproot your rutabagas to regain the option of planting your corn)



After “The End”

- Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem
 - Everyone was doing it right at the end of Chapter 8
 - So they took it seriously in Chapter 10
 - Please read Ezra 10:1
 - Why would the people take all of this to heart?
 - Is it enough to be genuinely sorry? Why or why not?
 - Penitence is *totally* enough for God's forgiveness —but genuine repentance is required for God's people to move forward from this point (i.e.; they need to stop with the *rutabagas* and plant *corn* now)



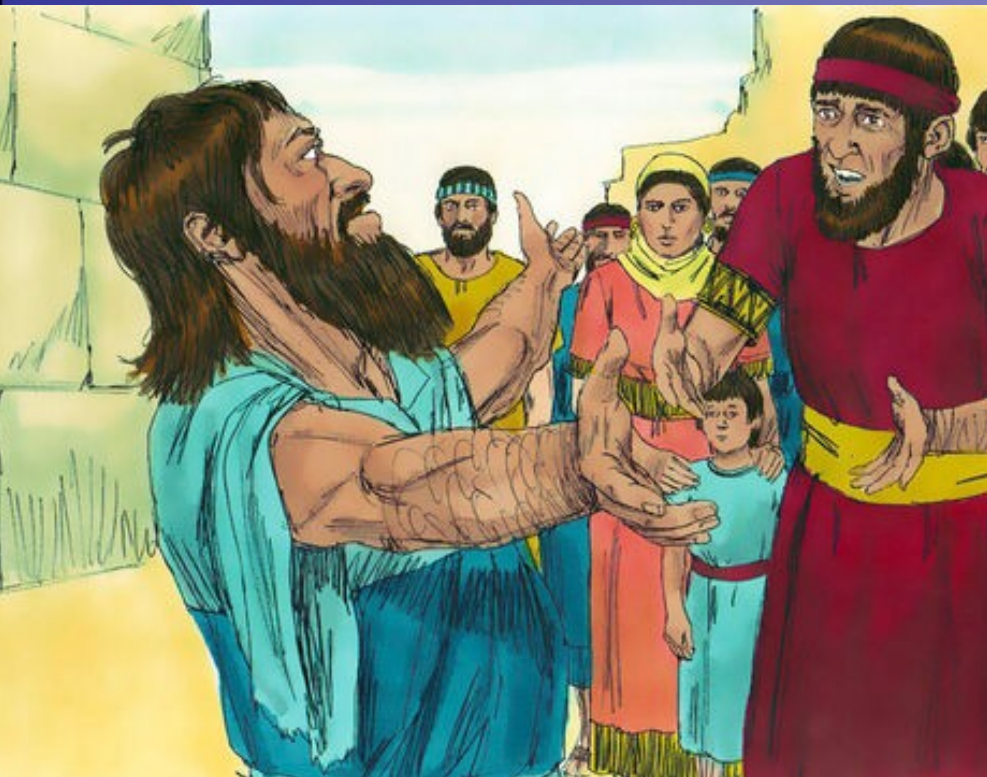
After “The End”

- **Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem**
 - Everyone was doing it right at the end of Chapter 8
 - **So they took it seriously in Chapter 10**
 - Please read Ezra 10:1
 - **Please read Ezra 10:2-4**
 - Some people have tried to connect Shecaniah with the guy who came with Ezra from Babylon in 8:5 (or one of the 70 unnamed descendants of Elam in 8:7) (and if so, then how does that affect your reading of what he recommends—and how he says it?)



After “The End”

- Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem
 - Everyone was doing it right at the end of Chapter 8
 - So they took it seriously in Chapter 10
 - Please read Ezra 10:1
 - Please read Ezra 10:2-4
 - Some people have tried to connect Shecaniah with the guy who came with Ezra from Babylon in 8:5
 - But there's a good chance “Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam” is someone new



—someone who had *already* been living in Jerusalem when Ezra arrived (and if so, then how does *that* affect your reading of what he recommends —and how he says it?)

(NOTE: According to Ezra 10:26, the guilty included Shecaniah's own father and uncles)

(NOTE²: The wording here is less “marrying foreign women” as it is more of a crass “shacking up with foreign women” —so does that make it better or worse?)



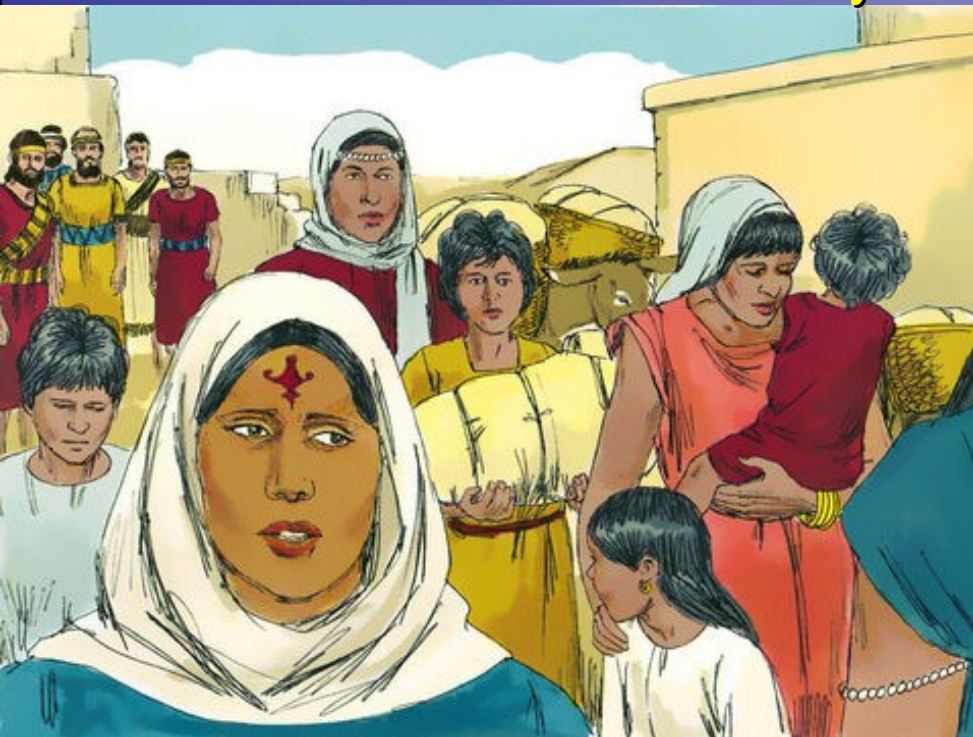
After “The End”



Funky little teaching moment...

- Is it fair to contemplate divorcing wives and sending away children, just because they weren't the “right” people to have interbred with?
 - Technically, that's an unfair way of asking that question—because they abandoned the question of “fairness” when they chose to sin in the first place
 - How can we justify remaining in or ignoring sin, just because it seems overly complicated or overly harsh to actually do what we'd need to do to deal with it?

(i.e.; can't we just pick a crop of corn from the fields, without having to uproot all of those rutabagas and do all of that replanting of corn?)

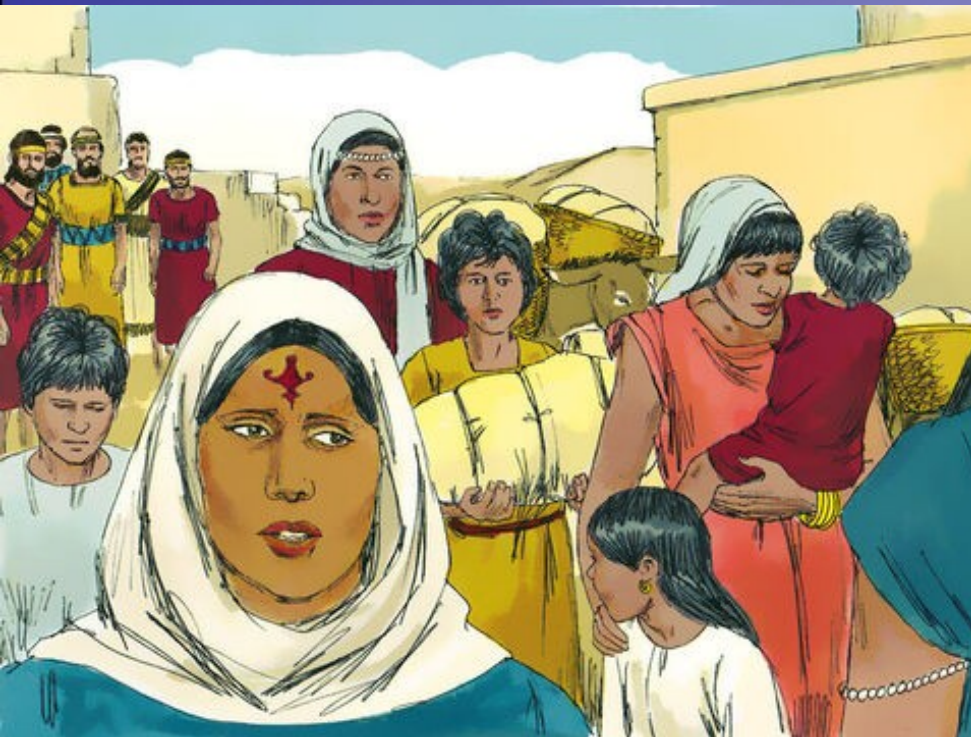


After “The End”



Funky little teaching moment...

- Is it fair to contemplate divorcing wives and sending away children, just because they weren't the “right” people to have interbred with?
- What are the options, logically?
 - 1) Stay with the families that were a sin to create
 - 2) Slaughter the families that were a sin to create
 - 3) Abandon the families that were a sin to create (pros and cons?)



After “The End”

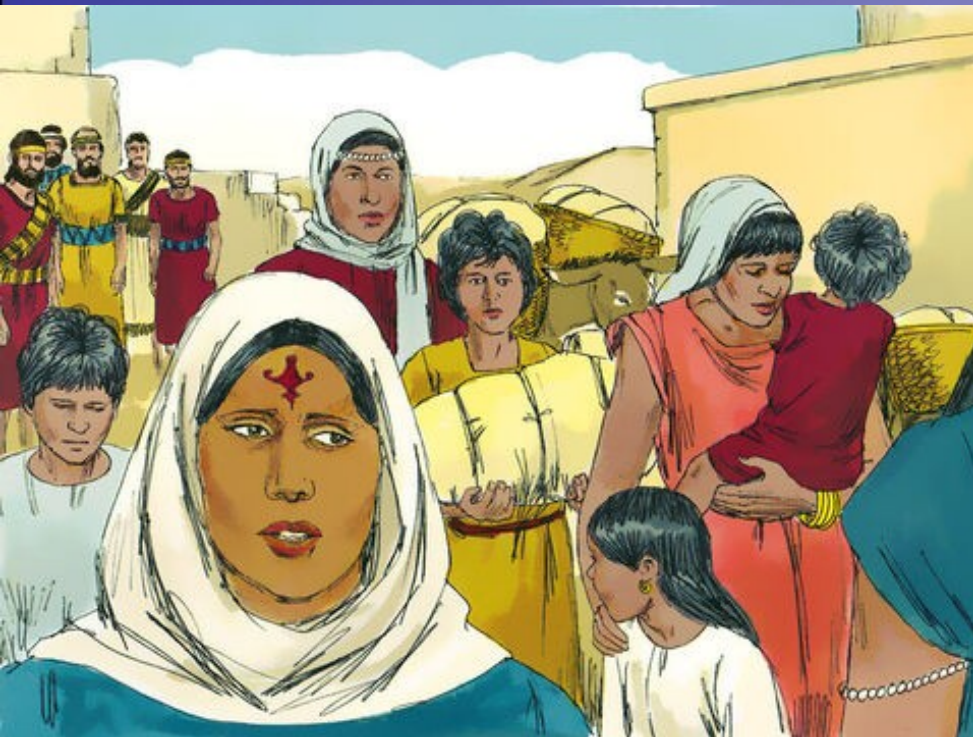


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- **What are the options, logically?**
 - 1) Stay with the families that were a sin to create
 - 2) Slaughter the families that were a sin to create
 - 3) Abandon the families that were a sin to create
 - 4) **Divorce the families that were a sin to create**

(NOTE: Yes, divorce always means that someone somewhere has fumbled something, and that at least someone is going to end up getting hurt, which is part of why God hates divorce—this is the context of the familiar Malachi 2:13-16)

(But we should note that Ezra 10:3 specifies that this was to be done “according to the Law” and the Law made specific provisions to protect those being divorced—see Deuteronomy 24:1-4, etc.)



After “The End”

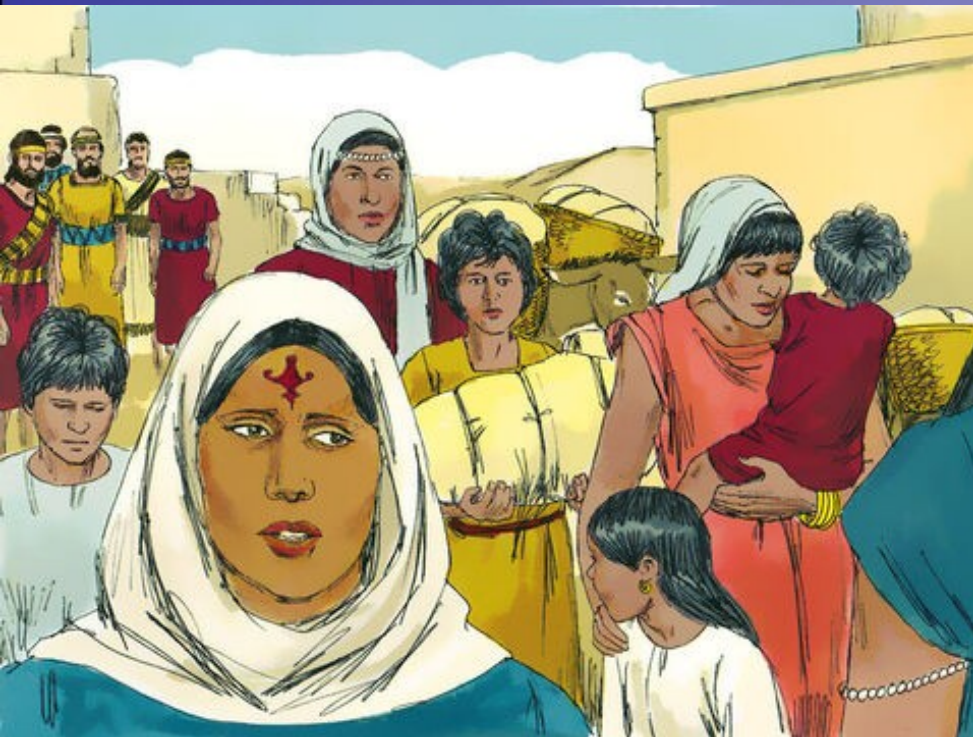


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(NOTE²: All of that is technically an argument for not screwing things up in the *first* place, if at all possible—the *most* un-fair action in all of this was creating the families that God forbade to *begin* with since that was *bound* to end up badly for them)



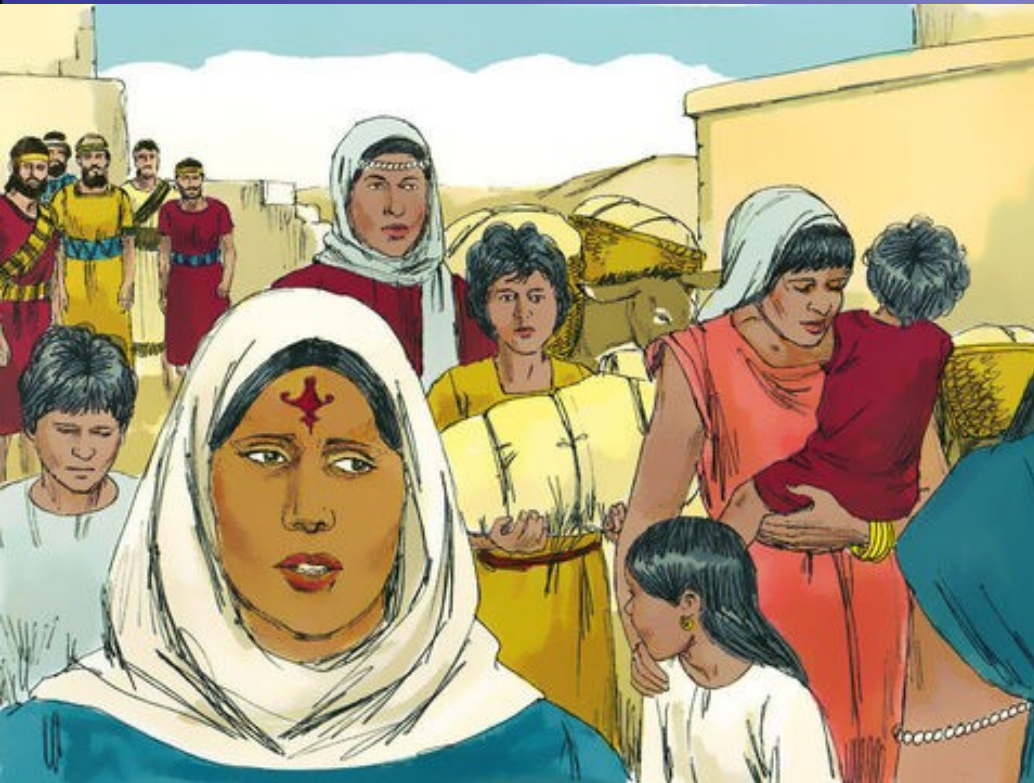
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 - So they took it seriously in Chapter 10
 - Please read Ezra 10:1
 - Please read Ezra 10:2-4
 - Please read Ezra 10:5-8
 - What kind of authority had Artaxerxes given Ezra way back in Ezra 7:25-26?
 - Does that explain the response in Ezra 10:9?
 - We're told that it was the rainy season, and that the people asked for time to sort the complex situation out responsibly
 - So how did Ezra and his leaders deal with them in Ezra 10:16-17?
 - What does all of that suggest about how we should deal with sin and toxic decisions *today* on a corporate and individual basis?

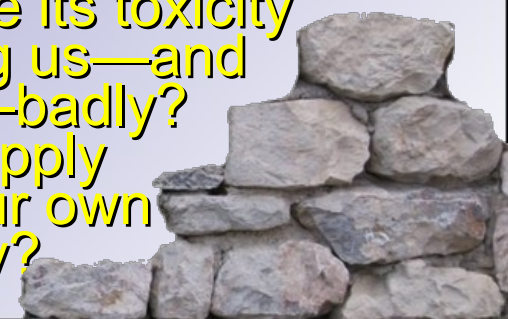


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 - So they took it seriously in Chapter 10
 - Please read Ezra 10:1
 - Please read Ezra 10:2-4
 - Please read Ezra 10:5-8
 - Looking at the list of names in Ezra 10:18-43, some scholars have suggested that these people only constituted a small percentage of the population

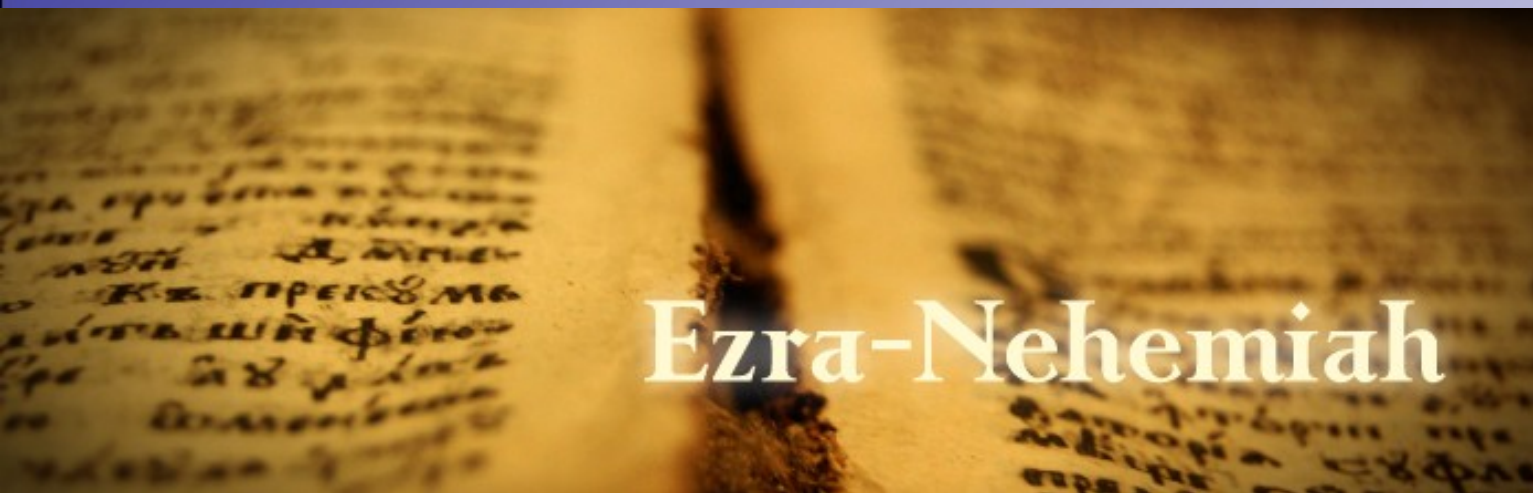


- And Ezra 10:44 tells us that only “some of them had children by these wives”
 - So if it's only a small sin—performed by only a small percentage of the people—then does that make it okay?
 - How much “that's not what God told us to do” is okay for us to do before its toxicity starts affecting us—and other people—badly?
 - How can we apply all of this to our own contexts today?



After “The End”

- Ezra the Scribe has come back to Jerusalem
 - Everyone was doing it right at the end of Chapter 8
 - So they took it seriously in Chapter 10
 - The End (*again*)
 - Then again, remember that the Book of Ezra was never originally intended to be read as a stand-alone book—it was just the first ten chapters of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah
 - So don't think of this as The End quite yet...



Ezra-Nehemiah

