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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- The crisis: Intermarriage with the peoples of the land 9:1-2
  - These various people groups from the land of Canaan had been under God's wrath since the time of the conquest.
  - These people would have come into these marriages "with their abominations". They brought their idolatrous religious practices with them.

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- The background: Old Testament Law prohibited marriage with the people of other nations and specifically with the people of Canaanite descent. (Leviticus 21:14; Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-11)
  - The main reason for this prohibition was to keep God's people from the idolatrous practices of these people. (see 1 Kings 11:4-8)
  - A second reason for this prohibition was to preserve the identity of the chosen people of God.

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Ezra's response 9:3-10:17
  - Outward expressions of intense sorrow 9:3-5
    - Tore his clothing (Leviticus 21:10)
    - Pulled out some of his hair (Leviticus 21:5)
    - Sat appalled
    - Fasted
    - Prayed

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Ezra's response 9:3-10:17
  - Ezra's prayer 9:6-15
    - Like Daniel (Daniel 9), Ezra identifies with the sin of the people around him and acknowledges the guilt of that sin.
    - Ezra recounts the past sins of the people and the judgment God has brought because of their iniquities.
    - He acknowledges the current blessings and mercies of the return to the land and the rebuilding of the temple.

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Ezra's response 9:3-10:17
  - Ezra's prayer 9:6-15
    - He is also well aware of the fact that they are not fully free, a lingering result of God's judgment.
    - Ezra goes on to confess the specific infraction of God's law regarding intermarriage with the people of that land.
    - He ends the prayer with the realization of the peril of this sin and appeals to God's justice and mercy.

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Response of the people 10:1-44
  - Ezra's public expressions of sorrow and prayer drew a great number of people who also began to experience conviction over their sin. 10:1-2
  - The people proposed that those guilty would make a covenant with God to put away the foreign wives and children. 10:3

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Response of the people 10:1-44
  - Ezra is encouraged to enforce this covenant. 10:4
  - Ezra immediately made the leading priests and Levites make this commitment. 10:5

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Response of the people 10:1-44
  - After a night of fasting and prayer Ezra called a mandatory meeting of all the returned exiles. 10:6-11
  - A proposal is presented to have the leaders appointed in all the cities and the people who had taken foreign wives come before these judges by appointment. 10:11-14

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Response of the people
  - The proposal was accepted with some objection. 10:15
  - The process took several months from the first day of the tenth month to the first day of the first month. 10:16-17

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Some observations
  - These events reveal the gravity of taking God's Word seriously and the serious consequences when His Word is broken.
  - This is a specific response to a clear and specific commandment to a select group of people. Care should be taken not to misapply this passage to marriage today.

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Ezra encounters a crisis that threatens the integrity of the Jewish people. Ezra 9-10

- Some observations
  - Although we have few details about the procedures followed, it is to be noted that the putting away of these wives and children was not done in a casual or haphazard way. Marriage is never looked upon lightly in scripture.
  - These events serve as a stark warning of how easily and subtly we can enter back into sinful behavior.

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