

City of God Part 12 - "A People Renewed" (7-12-26)

Introduction: Review where we are in the Series so far, then introduce today's topic.

• **Renewal** - 2 week exploration on Brokenness, Repentance, and Reform. **Today:** Corporate Renewal

Last Week: Ezra chapter 9 - Personal Brokenness

- 1) Facing the Facts
- 2) Posture of Humility and Brokenness
- 3) Ezra's Prayer - 4 aspects of prayerful repentance: conviction, confession, sorrow, in view of God's mercy

Today's Text: Ezra chapter 10 - Corporate Renewal

1) Godly Sorrow

Ezra 10:1 (ESV)

While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly.

Ezra 9:4 (ESV)

Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Application: Reform was not driven by the anger of Ezra toward the people, but by his sorrow and mourning for and with the people before the Lord.

Individual Sorrow can give way to Collective Sorrow - This opens the door for renewal . . .

Ezra 10:2-4 (ESV)

[2] And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. [3] Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. [4] Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it."

Note: Shecaniah stands up and initiates a movement toward renewal . . .

- Honest Confession - Specific Sin named, and acknowledges that was breaking faith with God
- Recognition that there is hope if they repent
- Recommends a costly step

This doesn't just come flippantly - Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam. The list of those who sinned is recorded later in the chapter. Take note of verse 26 . . .

Ezra 10:26 (ESV)

Of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

Note: His Father and 5 uncles all practiced this. He has to face a family pattern that he has been affected by. He draws a line that it stops with him.

He recommends a strong course of action, asking Ezra to lead them in this costly repentance . . .

Ezra 10:5-6 (ESV)

[5] Then Ezra arose and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take an oath that they would do as had been said. So they took the oath. [6] Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.

Note: Even as the journey of confession and repentance is about to begin, Ezra doesn't rush too quickly into action. He continues in his lament over their sin.

Consider - The Book of Lamentations (Jeremiah's lament over the fall of Jerusalem, and the sin of the people)

2) Confession**Ezra 10:7-9 (ESV)**

[7] And a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble at Jerusalem, [8] and that if anyone did not come within three days, by order of the officials and the elders all his property should be forfeited, and he himself banned from the congregation of the exiles. [9] Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. And all the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain.

Note: Confession isn't easy. It's before God, it's before His people. And of course it's cold and raining

This is a sacred assembly - not just a time of public prayer and worship, but of open confession . . .

Ezra 10:10-11 (ESV)

[10] And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. [11] Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives."

Note: Make confession - Make (to give), Confession (praise, thanksgiving, confession)

Example: Achan's sin (took what he should not have from the land and then hid it)

Joshua 7:19-20 (ESV)

[19] Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." [20] And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did:

Note: give praise - "Make confession"

Application: There is a time where the only proper way to worship and praise the Lord is to stop and confess. It is a combination of confessing our sin and brokenness, and declaring the character and nature of God in worship.

3) Holy Sacrifice**Ezra 10:11 (ESV)**

Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives."

Note: Ezra called them to Confession, and to a Holy Sacrifice.

- **Holy** - because they are to be set apart, but they have been intertwined with the people of the land
- **Sacrifice** - because true repentance isn't just words, it's facing consequences and setting things right.

Example of Holy Sacrifice: Zacchaeus . . .

Luke 19:8 (ESV)

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

Note: He didn't just say I'm really sorry. He took note of how his sin had affected others, and set out to make it right, at great cost!

Ezra 10:12-14 (ESV)

[12] Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said. [13] But the people are many, and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or for two, for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. [14] Let our officials stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city, until the fierce wrath of our God over this matter is turned away from us."

Note: They didn't look for a short cut, they wanted to do this truly and genuinely

Ezra 10:16-17 (ESV)

[16] Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra the priest selected men, heads of fathers' houses, according to their fathers' houses, each of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to examine the matter; [17] and by the first day of the first month they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women.

Note: The rest of the chapter records in specific public detail all who had sinned.

- **Final Note** - after 3 months of sorrow, confession, and holy sacrifice, they arrive at the New Year!
- **1st day of the 1st month** - the cleansing is complete. This has historical precedence . . .

Genesis 8:13 (ESV)

In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.

Note: The earth has been cleansed, and they entered a New Year of renewal, promise, and blessing!

The month of Nisan - the new year is the month of renewal, culminating in the Passover (celebrated on 15th)

Acts 3:19-20 (ESV)

[19] Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, [20] that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus

Conclusion: Will we reference Ezra 10 when talking about Sacred Assemblies of Revival and Repentance the same way we do 2 Chronicles 7:14. God's call that we humble ourselves and pray so He would heal us, is available, but Ezra 10 shows us how we do that. More than a large public gathering of words spoken, its a tangible setting apart through sorrow, confession, and a recommitment to costly holiness.

The City on a Hill is about a people unique and set apart, not just bright lights. Otherwise what differentiates Jerusalem from Vegas?

We have far too much show and entertainment, and not nearly enough genuine repentance which leads to real renewal of the people of God.

Verses for Further Reflection

1 John 1:7-9 (ESV)

[7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

James 5:16 (ESV)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Consider spending time in the Book of Lamentations. Here is a sampling . . .

Lamentations 1:1 (ESV)

How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.

Lamentations 1:18 (ESV)

The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.

Lamentations 1:20 (ESV)

Look, O LORD, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death.

Lamentations 2:19 (ESV)

“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street.”

Lamentations 3:21-26 (ESV)

[21] But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: [22] The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; [23] they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. [24] “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” [25] The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. [26] It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Lamentations 3:55-58 (ESV)

[55] “I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; [56] you heard my plea, ‘Do not close your ear to my cry for help!’ [57] You came near when I called on you; you said, ‘Do not fear!’ [58] “You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life.

Lamentations 5:21-22 (ESV)

[21] Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old— [22] unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.