

Ezra 10:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and 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 very sore.

Analysis

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and 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 very sore. Ezra's public mourning over Israel's sin catalyzed corporate repentance. The participles 'weeping and casting himself down' describe prostrate grief, not merely emotional display but physical embodiment of spiritual anguish. The location 'before the house of God' made his intercession highly visible, modeling leadership that mourns over sin rather than excusing it.

The response—"there assembled unto him... a very great congregation"—shows genuine leadership influence. Ezra didn't command attendance but attracted it through authentic spiritual burden. His grief over sin proved contagious as 'the people wept very sore' (vayyivku ha'am harbeh), indicating intense, widespread mourning. The inclusion of 'men and women and children' emphasizes comprehensive community participation, not merely religious leaders.

Theologically, this models how godly leadership catalyzes corporate repentance. Ezra's mourning wasn't manipulative performance but authentic grief over covenant violation. His example awakened the community's dormant conscience,

demonstrating that passionate spiritual leadership stirs corresponding passion in God's people. Leaders who deeply feel sin's offense against God evoke similar awareness in others.

Historical Context

Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:5-15) followed discovery of widespread intermarriage between returned exiles and pagan peoples (Ezra 9:1-4). This violated explicit Torah prohibition (Exodus 34:15-16, Deuteronomy 7:3-4) designed to prevent idolatry. The issue wasn't racial but religious—pagan spouses threatened to draw Israelites into idolatry, as had occurred with Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-8) and others throughout Israel's history.

Ezra's extreme grief reflected understanding of Israel's history. Previous generations' covenant unfaithfulness had resulted in exile and destruction. Now, barely established in the land, the community was repeating the very sins that caused catastrophe. Ezra feared God's judgment would strike again, potentially ending the restoration permanently. His mourning expressed existential terror about Israel's survival, not merely moral disapproval.

The public nature of Ezra's intercession occurred in the temple precincts where crowds gathered for worship. His prominent position as scribe and spiritual leader meant his actions drew attention. Rather than private rebuke, he chose public mourning, calling the community to self-examination and corporate repentance through personal example.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Ezra's public mourning teach about authentic spiritual leadership versus performative religiosity?
2. How does the people's responsive weeping demonstrate the contagious nature of genuine spiritual passion?
3. What role should corporate lament and repentance play in modern church life?

Interlinear Text

בְּכָה וְהַתִּזְעַזֵּעַ וְהַתְּפִלֵּל לְעֹזָר אֵת הַתִּזְעַזֵּעַ וְהַתִּזְעַזֵּעַ
had prayed Now when Ezra and when he had confessed weeping
H6419 H5830 H3034 H1058

נִקְבָּצָו בְּאָלָה יָמִים וּמִתְּנִפְפֵל לִפְנֵי יְהִי בְּיַתְּהֵר
and casting himself down before the house of God there assembled
H5307 H6440 H1004 H430 H6908

אָנָשִׁים מְאֹד בְּבָקָר מִשְׁרָאָל לְאַל יְהִי
unto him out of Israel congregation great a very of men
H413 H3478 H6951 H7227 H3966 H582

בְּכָה: פְּרִבָּה בְּעַמְּדָה וְגַשְׁים וְילָדִים פִּי בְּכָה וְהַטְּבָלָה
and women and children weeping for the people very sore
H802 H3206 H1058 H5971 H7235 H1059

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 9:20 (Prayer): And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;

Psalms 119:136 (Parallel theme): Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Romans 9:2 (Parallel theme): That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

1 Kings 8:30 (Prayer): And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

Nehemiah 8:9 (References God): And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

Luke 19:41 (Parallel theme): And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Nehemiah 10:28 (References God): And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding;

Zechariah 12:10 (Parallel theme): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

2 Chronicles 20:9 (Parallel theme): If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.