

Ezra 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,

Analysis

The 'evening sacrifice' (about 3 PM) was one of the two daily tamid offerings. Ezra chose this time deliberately—when the community gathered for sacrifice, his public prayer would have maximum impact and participation. Rising 'from my heaviness' (Hebrew *ta'anit*, meaning humiliation/affliction) shows Ezra emerging from mourning to intercession. His posture—'fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God'—combines physical humility (kneeling) with supplication (spread hands). This embodied prayer demonstrates that physical posture can appropriately express heart attitude. Ezra's personal identification—'my God'—shows intimate relationship even while confessing corporate sin. The prayer that follows is one of Scripture's great penitential prayers.

Historical Context

The evening sacrifice time ensured maximum participation in Ezra's prayer. The gathered community would hear and join his confession. Ancient Hebrew prayer often involved bodily posture—standing (1 Samuel 1:26), kneeling (1 Kings 8:54), or prostrating (Genesis 17:3). The raising of hands symbolized both supplication (receiving from God) and consecration (offering to God). Ezra's public prayer at the regular sacrifice time linked his intercession to the ongoing sacrificial system, showing that sacrifice alone without repentance was insufficient. His prayer would continue through verses 6-15, providing theological interpretation of the crisis and calling for covenant renewal.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Ezra's choice of time for prayer demonstrate wisdom in leading corporate repentance?
2. What role does physical posture play in expressing reverence, humility, and earnestness in prayer?
3. In what ways can pastors lead congregations in corporate confession and intercession?

Interlinear Text

וְקָרַעַת מִתְעַנֵּית וְבָמְנַחַת תִּשְׁעַרְבָּה
sacrifice And at the evening I arose up from my heaviness and having rent
H4503 H6153 H6965 H8589 H7167

תִּפְרַשְׁתָּה בָּרְכָה עַל תְּאַכְרַעַת בְּגָדְךָ
my garment and my mantle I fell upon my knees and spread out
H899 H4598 H3766 H5921 H1290 H6566

אֶל-כָּפֵר אֶל-הָיָה יְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים
my hands unto the LORD my God
H3709 H413 H3068 H430

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 8:54 (Sacrifice): And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

1 Kings 8:22 (Sacrifice): And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

1 Kings 8:38 (Parallel theme): What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

Exodus 9:29 (References Lord): And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S.

Exodus 9:33 (References Lord): And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

Psalms 141:2 (Sacrifice): Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Psalms 143:6 (Parallel theme): I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Psalms 95:6 (References Lord): O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

Ephesians 3:14 (References Lord): For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Chronicles 6:13 (Parallel theme): For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,

