



December 13, 2015

Ezra 7 - 10

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 6

*"The Beauty of Brokenness"*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In every culture around the world, something that is broken becomes worthless and is discarded. Only in the Kingdom of God is something broken of great value. It's a beautiful thing to God when we become broken over our sin - when we humble ourselves and confess sin so that God can forgive us. In the closing chapters of Ezra, the people had committed a grievous sin, but when they responded with weeping, confession, and humility, they were met with the grace of God. So it is with our lives, as well.

### Historical Background

1. The Temple was completed in 516 BC, on the third day of the month of Adar.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. **Ezra 6:15** - *"The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius."*
2. There is an approximately 60-year time gap between Ezra chapters six and seven.
3. All of the events in the book of Esther took place during this 60-year period.
  - a. Esther, a Jewess, became Queen of Persia by the divine hand of God, and it was Esther who would save the Jewish people from extinction.
4. We are first introduced to Ezra, the author of this book, in **Ezra 7:1**.
5. In 458BC, Ezra led the second wave of returning exiles, approximately 80 years after the first return of approximately 50,000 people.

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<sup>1</sup> The month of Adar correlates to our calendar month of March.

6. In [Ezra 8:1-14](#), we learn that the census of returning exiles only totaled 1,754 men, however, adding women and children to this total would have made the number approximately 5,000 to 6,000.

### Ezra Was A Godly Man

7. In [Ezra 7:2-5](#), we learn that Ezra was a descendent of Aaron, Moses' brother, which means he was from the line and tribe of Levi, which made him a priest by birth.
8. [Ezra 7:6b](#) - *"[Ezra] was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given."*
9. [Ezra 7:10](#) - *"... Ezra had devoted himself to the study of observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel."*
10. Ezra modeled a life of deep devotion and sincere commitment to God.
11. Ezra was extremely sensitive to the things that pleased the Lord, as well as the things that displeased the Lord.

### Ezra Was A Leader

12. [Ezra 8:21-23](#) - *"There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, 'The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.' So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer."*
13. God answered prayer, according to [Ezra 8:31](#), which says: *"On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way. So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days."*
14. They traveled approximately 900 miles in four months (basically March through July).

## Ezra Was Grieved Over Sin

15. [Ezra 9:1-2](#) - *"... the leaders came to me and said, 'The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.' "*
16. Some of the leaders of the people met with Ezra to tell him about the sin the men have been committing during the past 80 years.
17. [Ezra 9:3-4](#) - *"When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice."*
18. The rest of chapter nine contains Ezra's prayer to the Lord.
19. [Ezra 10:1-2](#) - *"While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites - men, women and children - gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, 'We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel.' "*

## Ezra And The Israelites Were Humbled And Broken Over Sin

20. Pastor Gary said: "You know when you're not walking with God. You know when you're not right with God. The sins that we commit against God will always be met with the loving, tender, forgiveness of God, if we come clean and confess our sins to him."
21. Shecaniah recognized the sin problem, but he also recognized that there was the hope of forgiveness from the Lord!
22. [1 John 1:9](#) - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

23. Pastor Gary said the actual sin of Israel was not interracial marriage, international marriage, or inter-cultural marriage, because the Bible records many examples of Jewish men marrying women who were proselytes to Judaism, who had turned to the Lord.
  - a. Biblical examples include: Moses married Zipporah, a woman from Ethiopia; Salmon married Rahab, a Gentile prostitute; and Boaz married Ruth, a Gentile woman from Moab.
24. The sin of Israel was that the Jewish men married women who worshiped pagan gods.
25. Their sin was a spiritual issue, not an exterior problem.
26. Their sin was made it possible for the potential annihilation of the Jewish race, because intermarriage with pagan women would naturally lead to the Jews to be absorbed into the pagan culture, and they would no longer be a distinct people of God.
27. They demonstrated brokenness over sin in the following ways:
  - a. [Ezra 8:21](#) - *"we humbled ourselves"*
  - b. [Ezra 8:23](#) - *"we fasted"*
  - c. [Ezra 8:23](#) - *"we petitioned our God"*
  - d. [Ezra 9:4](#) - *"I sat there appalled"*
  - e. [Ezra 9:5](#) - *"I fell on my knees"*
  - f. [Ezra 9:6](#) - *"I am too ashamed and disgraced"*
  - g. [Ezra 10:1](#) - *"praying"*
  - h. [Ezra 10:1](#) - *"confessing"*
  - i. [Ezra 10:1](#) - *"weeping"*
  - j. [Ezra 10:13](#) - *"we have sinned greatly"*
28. They were gripped in their heart about all they had done wrong, and how they had sinned against God.

#### We Must Stay Humble And Broken Over Sin

29. Pastor Gary said: "What is worse than sinning against God? It's when we develop a hard heart about our sin toward God. So, when, not if, we sin, the most important thing is to be broken about it. To feel sorry [about] it. To stay tenderhearted toward God. To come before him broken. Maybe even at times weeping over our sin; confessing it [to] God."

30. Each one of the three major revivals in American history was preceded by repentance and weeping over sin.
31. David was confronted by the prophet Nathan concerning his affair with Bathsheba and what amounted to the murder of her husband, Uriah, which prompted David to write [Psalm 51](#).
32. David should have been killed, because he was guilty of committing several capital offenses, including adultery and being an accessory to murder, as well as lying and coveting.
33. [Psalm 51:16-17](#) - *“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*
34. David realized the only thing he could do was to call out to God in his brokenness, and come before the Lord in repentance and confession.
35. “Whenever God means to make a man great, he always breaks him in pieces first.”- Charles Spurgeon
36. Pastor Gary said it’s universally true that things that are broken are usually worthless, however, in the kingdom of God; we find that when we humble ourselves, and are broken before the Lord, we are of great value to God.
37. [Isaiah 1:18](#) - *“ ‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’ ”*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Ezra 7:1-10](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences concerning the ways they’ve grown in their knowledge of the Bible because of the teaching ministry of Cornerstone Chapel. (See #8 and #9 above)

4. Would others say you are a good model of a person who has a sincere commitment to God?
5. Spend time sharing examples of how the Lord has specifically answered prayer in your life.
6. How has the Lord ministered to you during times of fasting?
7. Read and discuss [Ezra 9:1-4](#) and [Ezra 10:1-2](#).
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning being humble and broken over sin. (See #29 above)
9. Read and discuss [Psalm 51:16-17](#).
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).