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# Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks Baptist Church**  
Grand Prairie, Texas

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## The Faith-in-Action Preacher Ezra 10:1-12

### Lesson Background and Introduction

Under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire overtook Jerusalem and exiled the people of Israel in 586 BC. Eventually, the Persian King Cyrus defeated Babylon. He released Jewish exiles to return home to Jerusalem in 538 BC for the express purpose of rebuilding the temple (see Ezra 10:1). Following that first wave of returning exiles in 538 BC was a second led by Ezra in 458 BC (7:7, 13). He desired to restore the people to a state of faithful adherence to God's law (7:25-27). The third and final wave of exiles returned to Jerusalem in 444 BC, led by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1-9). Ezra was a teacher of the Law of Moses, commissioned by God (Ezra 7:6). One of the great gifts for Christian instruction in the Old Testament is seeing episode after episode of Israel's rebellion against God and God's subsequent restoration of his covenant people. In today's text, we have been party to yet another instance of this. The people of God were again in danger of sliding back into idolatry because of their disobedience to God's law. This is a reminder that God's laws are put in place for our good and His glory. Like the ancient Jews, we too are tempted by the culture that surrounds us—including the temptation to marry unbelievers (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). God's mercy provided hope for Israel to be restored to a right relationship with Him. But that required someone who would take the lead! Not everyone is gifted in the same way in this regard, and different leaders may respond differently to the same problem. (It's rather humorous to contrast Ezra's leadership style in Ezra 9:3 with that of Nehemiah in Nehemiah 13:25.) But it all begins with having a burden of the heart and soul. God's forgiving grace is available to us because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The church is his bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2, 9; 22:17). May we be faithful to our bridegroom.

*(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

**Humble Service** - Ezra was a man who boldly represented God and His principles. He desired the Lord's words and ways to be acknowledged, then followed. On one occasion, Ezra humbly threw himself on the ground, bowing before the Lord in the temple. He confessed and sorrowed deeply for the sin of God's people. While Ezra lamented, several visitors in the temple gathered around him, and they too began to weep, fearing God's wrath. While observing Ezra, Shekariah (KJV: Shecheniah), a pious man who may have traveled with Ezra from Babylon, spoke out. He realized the seriousness of the nation's sin—specifically, the Jewish men taking foreign wives. Shekariah suggested the sending away (divorcing) of the non-Jewish wives to preserve the moral and spiritual welfare of God's people. This act demonstrated brokenness over their disobedience and also genuine repentance. Their repentance indicated hope, as the people started weeping over their sin and determined to do something about it.

**Decisive Action** - Ezra agreed to Shekariah's counsel. Even though this much had been accomplished, Ezra continued his mourning by entering into a strict fast. After Ezra met with the princes and elders, the entire congregation had to gather within three days. The leadership sent messengers to proclaim the urgent meeting. The absent individuals risked suffering heavy penalties. Therefore, the majority of Jewish men gathered at Jerusalem in the pouring rain to show their determination to please the Lord. Ezra ordered the men to break all ties with any of their foreign family and friends. The audience loudly agreed. Ezra pulled no punches. He wanted the Lord's name and commandments to be upheld. Only quick and decisive action by the people would solve their problem.

*(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)*

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:**  
If God has already told you what to do, you don't need to ask Him again

**PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:**  
Lord, when I sense Your call to serve, Help me to follow through; I must not just stand by and pray When there is work to do.

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:**  
And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward  
(Exod 14:15 NKJV)

*(from "Our Daily Bread", Jan 26, 2004)*

**Series: Prophets Faithful to God's Covenant**

**UNIT 2: Prophets of Restoration**

**NEXT WEEK**

**The Restoring Builder (Nehemiah 2:11-20)**

## NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

### **Conviction of Sin (Ezra 10:1-4)**

#### *Conviction through confession (1-2)*

- Confession that leads to forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
- Confession that helps relieve the guilt of sin (Ps 32:5)
- Confession that leads to healing (2 Chron 7:14)
- Confession and not concealing that leads to mercy (Prov 28:13)
- Confession that acknowledges God is right in His judgment (Ps 51:3-4)

#### *Conviction through a covenant (3)*

- Covenant because God remembers His covenants regardless of our rebellion (Ps 106:43-45)
- Covenant because God is faithful to His people of the covenant (Ps 111:9)
- Covenant because God upholds His people (Isa 42:6)
- Covenant that leads to service to God (Josh 24:14-22)
- Covenant by making a vow (Num 30:1-2)

#### *Conviction through accountability (4)*

- Accountable to God (Rom 3:19)
- Accountable at work (Eph 6:5-9)
- Accountable to higher human officials (Eccl 5:8)
- Accountable to leaders (Heb 13:17)
- Accountable for how we treat others (Matt 18:32-34)

### **Call for Commitment (Ezra 10:5-8)**

#### *Commitment through promises (5)*

- Promises must be kept (Eccl 5:4)
- Promises must never be slow about fulfilling (Deut 23:21)
- Promises must be kept even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)
- Promises should not be hastily or rashly given (Prov 20:25)

#### *Commitment through fasting (6)*

- Fasting because of sins committed (Deut 9:18)
- Fasting because of seeking to finish God's work (John 4:34)
- Fasting because of being grieved in spirit (Ps 102:4)
- Fasting the way God desires (Isa 58:5-7)

#### *Commitment through penalties (7-8)*

- Punishment for doing evil (John 5:28-29)
- Punishment because of not being obedient to God (2 Thess 1:7-9)
- Punishment for being a hypocrite (Matt 23:13)
- Punishment could include distress and gloom (Isa 8:20-22)
- Punishment because of rejection of the truth (Rom 2:8)

### **Call to Action (Ezra 10:9-12)**

#### *Action to gather together (9)*

- God longs to gather His people (Matt 23:37)
- God will gather His people one by one (Isa 27:12)
- God will gather all groups and types of His people into one (Isa 56:8)
- God sends His angels to gather (Matt 13:40-42)
- God will gather to judge (Matt 25:32)

#### *Action to repent (10-11)*

- Repentance is a "changing of one's mind" (Matt 21:28-29)
- Repentance is a prerequisite to being saved from perishing (Luke 13:3)
- Repentance is part of forgiveness (Acts 2:38)
- Repentance is a path to life (Acts 11:18)
- Repentance is having godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10-11)

#### *Action to obey (12)*

- Obedience because it delights God (1 Sam 15:22)
- Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)
- Obedience leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)
- Obedience keeps us remaining in God's love (John 15:10)
- Obedience leads to the reward of blessings (Deut. 28:1-6)
- Obedience brings the reward of freedom (James 1:25)