

My Family is My God's Business

Ezra 9 Monologue

Topic: Worldliness
Subject: Want a pure church?
Complement: Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!
Purpose: The listeners will rid themselves of ungodly influences that wreck their own spiritual lives and eventually that of the church

Note: The monologue setting is Ezra appearing after having come back to life and living in Singapore for some time (unspecified length).

INTRO Shalom. Baruchi Adonai. You probably know that "Shalom" means "welcome" or
Heb. "peace" and "baruchi Adonai" means "bless the Lord." Since I have been in your
OXO land, I have not heard your people speak these Hebrew words. Do you not know
OOO Hebrew? Surely you do! You say "hallelujah" instead of "praise the Lord," you say
"amen."

Ezra I suppose I should first introduce myself. I am Ezra, the son of Seraiah. My
ancestry goes all the way back to Zadok and even further back to Aaron himself.
You will remember that all descendents of Aaron were priests, so I am no
exception.

Priest King David divided the priesthood into 26 divisions, each of which served for two
weeks a year at the temple in Jerusalem. But the other 50 weeks we lived in
separate towns around the country to teach the children of Israel to live a
separated life unto Jehovah. This is why I do not wear the white priestly tunic
today, for this is how I dressed most of the year except for temple service.

BKGD I wish I could say that we were always faithful to our high calling of teaching, but
Exile we were not. In fact, the priests themselves often followed other gods and led
OOO Israel away from the Lord rather than to Him. This went on for so many hundreds
XOO of years that God's patience finally wore thin, and he raised up two powers to
judge His people. The Assyrians conquered the northern part of our country, and
the Babylonians ravaged the south, including Jerusalem. This destroyed the very
heart of Israel—the temple, which laid in ruins for 70 years.

Return Yet God, in His own gracious way, brought our people back to the land.
Zerubbabel led 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple on its rightful
spot, then 57 years later the Lord used me to bring another 5,000 back. If you
paid attention to the numbers I just gave, you would have noticed that I was only
able to bring 10% of what Zerubbabel brought. And considering that the Jews had
lived in Babylon for almost 130 years, this was a very small number of Jews who
returned.

Why
so few "Why so few?" I remember asking. At the beginning of the exile, the prophet
Jeremiah had advised us that we would be there for 70 years. He said that we
should plant vineyards, marry, and build houses to stay a while. Perhaps we took
Jeremiah too literally. My people began businesses—very profitable ones—but
when the call came two or three generations later to go to a land of ruins, few
responded. In my age we enjoyed the comforts of this life, which sapped our
spiritual energy. I suppose that by now, after all the centuries, you have learned

not to seek comforts over the Lord though.

Settle Anyway, we did return, despite our small number. God gave us safe passage to Jerusalem, where we offered sacrifices and began to get settled into our homes.

TEXT
Kidron When we had been there for a little over four months, one afternoon I was sitting on the roof of my newly made home, looking out eastward across the Kidron Valley. I remember thinking about how the Babylonian armies had crossed over the Mount of Olives in front of me, ruthlessly slaughtering our people. On the south end of the Mount of Olives were some ruins from Solomon's era 500 years before. Those destroyed buildings housed Solomon's 700 wives and 300 porcupines—I mean concubines. I thanked the Lord that the intermarriage with the pagans that had devastated Solomon's empire was behind us—we'd never repeat that mistake again. We were too smart now.

Report 9:1a But then I heard some men talking and looked up the hill to my left—up the City of David. I saw some of my trusted friends approaching my house, so I hurried down to meet them. Bigthani was the first to speak, "Ezra, I have terrible news to report. 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."

Badal I paused, bowed my head, and wondered what they meant. They used the word *badal*, saying that the people neglected to be "divided or separated" from pagans. This immediately reminded me of how Moses wrote in the creation account that "God separated the light from the darkness." Then I remembered that the Lord used the same word for setting apart the Levites to God for special service. What could these leaders mean that our people were not "separate"? Separate in what sense? Hopefully they only meant that some had illegal business deals going with pagans or that someone was lured into a questionable celebration.

Child Sacr. The men had said that Israel was involved in *practices* of eight pagan peoples, most of whom God had already destroyed by this time. I knew what "detestable practices" meant, for behind me in the Hinnom Valley many Israelite children had been sacrificed to the god Molech. Could it be that this pagan practice has again returned to Israel? But how?

Inter-marry 9:2 The men's explanation confirmed my worst fears. They said that some of these priests and Levites had "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 led the way in this unfaithfulness."

Tunic 9:3 I couldn't believe my ears! Without even a thought, I tore my tunic and cloak. Most of the time, those in grief in my land only tear their tunic, but my distress so overwhelmed me that I tore the overcoat or cloak as well. I yanked out hair from my head—I don't ever remember doing this in my life—and grabbed clutches of hair even from my beard. Exhausted and distressed, I sat down appalled.

Crowd 9:4-5; 10:1 A crowd of pious Jews gathered around me and said nothing for several hours. I said so little too as I was in such dire agony from our sin. Occasionally I would lift my head and say something, but then at the evening sacrifice I lifted my hands publicly and prayed in anguish. I confessed the sin of my people, throwing myself down in agony before the Lord, tears streaming down my face.

- WHY Word soon spread around the community about my actions. But Sheconiah said that some of the people were saying, “But what was so bad about Jews intermarrying with pagans? Isn’t God the God of all people? Can the Lord who created everyone really be a racist? Isn’t he at all tolerant? Besides, so few Jewish women have returned from Babylon that there’s not enough godly women to go around!”
- OXO
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- 1 History “Have you no sense of history?” I told them. “Abraham made Isaac swear never to marry a Canaanite woman. Isaac obeyed and convinced his son Jacob to do the same, which provided our twelve tribes. Jacob traveled all the way back to Mesopotamia for a legitimate wife, Rachel. But his brother Esau spitefully disregarded this by marrying a Hittite, and their mixed-breed Edomites plague us to this day. Intermarriage gave us the terrible cycles of the judges. Do we want that again? And even our wisest and richest king—Solomon himself—went astray by intermarriage! Are you smarter than Solomon?”
- 2 Law The law of Moses was very clear on this matter, “Do not marry with [the peoples of the lands around you.] Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.” We have spurned the statutes of Jehovah God!
- 3 Race One phrase stuck out from all the grievous words the men had said: “they have mingled the holy race.” This meant that the Messianic line itself was endangered. God had said that the Messiah would descend from the tribe of Judah. Here we were, in the land of Judah ourselves, with so few men of Judah. The thought struck me that this type of sin could pollute the very bloodline that we were to protect for our Messiah!
- EI Do you people here today see why I was so grieved? It wasn’t that it was simply an individual sin. I’ve heard people say, “My family is my business.” How arrogant! No, my family is God’s business. And my family is Israel’s business. We are a corporate community, so the sin of one will affect the entire group.
- APPL Is it not so with you in this assembly? You too struggle with the peril of prosperity. You too wrestle with this temptation to pursue other gods, although these gods are more carefully disguised than in my age. You too are tempted to intermarry. And you too must watch the influences in your life.
- OOX
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- M.I. I should point out, though, that my grief at the intermarriage went beyond husband-wife relationships. My point was that any pagan influence allowed in the home can destroy the entire assembly as well as the individual home. When we allow ungodly forces to work within our homes, we plant the seeds of destruction for the whole godly community. Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!
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- “No Pagan
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here” In my short sojourn in your land, I have noticed a peculiar thing among those calling themselves Christians. Many would never marry a pagan; many even say they would never even allow a pagan to enter their homes. But I know that there are literally hundreds of murders, numerous incidents of sexual immorality, and an abundance of pagan philosophies within countless Christian Singaporean homes!
- T.V. Many here do not believe me, but it is true. This can be observed any day in a little box inside the living room of nearly every home. What a strange name—“living room”—for a place where so much *dying* takes place! The kind of people whom Christian parents would never invite for dinner are allowed to have free reign on this picture window.

Concl. Will we allow paganism into our homes? I pray we will not! Whether through marriage, friends, or even games or a pagan picture box. The whole Israelite community was grieved at its sin of inviting disaster upon the land. With us Jews, individual sin became family sin, and family sin became community sin that nearly obliterated our race. It is the same with you. But you can learn from the mistakes of my people. I know you will.

Trinity Church (Presbyterian)
2 July 1995
Message
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single

35 Minutes

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Note: The monologue setting is Ezra visiting the church itself after having come back to life and living in Singapore for some time (unspecified length). This allows for more direct application at the end.

INTRO Shalom. Baruchi Adonai. You probably know that “Shalom” means “welcome” or
Heb. “peace” and “baruchi Adonai” means “bless the Lord.” Since I have been in your
OXO land I don’t believe I have heard your people speak these Hebrew words. Don’t
OOO you know Hebrew? Surely you do! You say “hallelujah” instead of “praise the
Lord,” you say “amen.”

Lips Alas, I didn’t come this morning to teach you Hebrew. Rather, the Lord has been so gracious to allow me to finally speak. You see, I have been here in your country observing those who claim His name, but until now the Lord has sealed my lips from publicly declaring any of my observations.

Ezra I suppose I should first introduce myself. I am Ezra, the son of Seraiah. My ancestry goes all the way back to Zadok and even further back to Aaron himself. Perhaps you can tell by this what my occupation was in Israel. You will remember that all descendents of Aaron were priests, so I am no exception.

Priest Of all the sons of Jacob, only one tribe had their jobs determined by divine order—the Levites. Levites were the “full-time Jewish workers” in the congregation, some of whom served as priests. So all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests—only those descended from Aaron. Levites received no land to till as farmers, and we were not to live together in one section of the country as the other tribes who had their allotments. In fact, God ordained that we be spread throughout the land among all the tribes. Why? So we could be close to all the people of Israel. We were to spend our time studying the Torah and teaching God’s people God’s ways. King David divided the priesthood into 26 divisions, each of which served for two weeks a year at the temple in Jerusalem. But the other 50 weeks we lived in separate towns around the country to teach the children of Israel to live a separated life unto Jehovah. This is why I do not wear the white priestly tunic today, for this is how I dressed most of the year except for temple service.

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Exile we were not. In fact, the priests themselves often followed other gods and lead
OOO the people away from the Lord rather than to Him. This went on for so many
XOO hundreds of years that God’s patience finally wore thin and he raised up two

powers to judge His people. The Assyrians conquered the northern part of our country and the Babylonians ravaged the south, including Jerusalem. This destroyed the very heart of Israel—the temple, which laid in ruins for 70 years. In fact, earlier under the reign of the evil Manasseh who desecrated the temple with idols, one of the Jewish communities in Egypt so lost hope in God’s blessing on the land that it built an alternative temple on the Elephantine Island in the Nile River. This lasted 200 years, was destroyed and rebuilt.

Return Yet God, in His own gracious way, brought our people back to the land. Zerubbabel led 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple on its rightful spot, then 57 years later the Lord used me to bring another 5,000 back. If you paid attention to the numbers I just gave, you would have noticed that I was only able to bring 10% of what Zerubbabel brought. And considering that the Jews had lived in Babylon for almost 130 years, this was a very small amount of Jews who returned.

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Badal

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- Child Sacr. The men had said that Israel was involved in *practices* of eight pagan peoples, most of whom God had already destroyed by this time. I knew what “detestable practices” meant, for behind me in the Hinnom Valley many Israelite children had been sacrificed to the god Molech. No wonder why the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians were the only groups left! Could it be that this pagan practice has again returned to Israel? But how?
- Inter-marry 9:2 The men continued their explanation which confirmed my worst fears. They said that some of these priests and Levites had “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 led the way in this unfaithfulness.”
- Tunic 9:3 I couldn’t believe my ears! Without even a thought, I tore my tunic and cloak. Most of the time, those in grief in my land only tear their tunic, but my distress so overwhelmed me that I tore the overcoat or cloak as well. I yanked out hair from my head—I don’t ever remember doing this in my life—and grabbed clutches of hair even from my beard. Exhausted and distressed, I sat down appalled.
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OOO Word soon spread around the community about my actions. But Sheconiah said that some of the people were saying, “But what was so bad about Jews intermarrying with pagans? Isn’t God the God of all people? Can the Lord who created everyone really be a racist? Isn’t he at all tolerant? Besides, so few Jewish women have returned from Babylon that there’s not enough godly women to go around!”
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- 2 Law The law of Moses was very clear on this matter, “Do not marry with [the peoples of the lands around you.] Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.” We have spurned the statutes of Jehovah God!
- 3 Samaria I told those around me that the intermarried peoples are the very ones who opposed the rebuilding of our temple. [To audience] You see, the Assyrians destroyed the northern nation of Israel and sent all our people out of the land—but they left the very poor. Then the Assyrians brought in other conquered peoples from Mesopotamia and Aram to the north. Well, these pagans intermarried with the Jews who were left, who were pagan enough as it was! Then their ancestors, called Samaritans, began opposing the temple rebuilding. They didn’t want another rival temple in their midst.
- 4 At one point I said to the faithful around me, “How could we have entered into the

Eleph. most intimate relationship of all—marriage itself—with those who did not claim the Lord? Yes, *badal* means to separate light from darkness! How could we have invited darkness into our midst!? This will soon extinguish the light! Don't these who have sinned know that the Elephantine Jewish settlement in Egypt intermarried and soon dedicated their temple to 'Anathbethel,' a name which shows a mixture of pagan gods and the true Lord?" Somehow I just knew that this Jewish Elephantine community would later deteriorate and assimilate into the pagan Egyptian culture.

5
Race One phrase stuck out from all the grievous words the men had said: "they have mingled the holy race." This meant that the Messianic line itself was endangered. As far back as Jacob's blessing on the tribes in Genesis, God had said that the Messiah would descend from the tribe of Judah. Here we were, in the land of Judah ourselves, with so few men of Judah. The thought struck me that this type of sin could pollute the very blood line that we were to protect for our Messiah!

EI Do you people here today see why I was so grieved? It wasn't that it was simply an individual sin. I've heard people say, "My family is my business." How arrogant! No, my family is God's business. And my family is Israel's business. We are a corporate community, so the sin of one will affect the entire group.

APPL Is it not so with you in this assembly? Actually, as I have been watching your people, I have noticed that you also have the same problems in family life that plagued my people long ago. You too struggle with the peril of prosperity. You too wrestle with this temptation to pursue other gods, although these gods are more carefully disguised than in my age. You too are tempted to intermarry. And you too must watch the influences in your life.

Marry Do you not know that your side of the Book also prohibits intermarriage? The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Yokes Do you understand about yokes? No, not egg yokes! Ox yokes! I remember one time as a small boy my father asked me to hitch up the oxen to plow a small field. I could only find one ox so I put a sheep on the other side of the yoke—the heavy wood brace joining the necks of the two animals together for work. That ox must have thought I was crazy! But I supposed it would work since the sheep was one of the bigger ones I could find. I thought that the ox would teach the sheep the ropes, but you know what actually happened? The ox couldn't steer the plow straight and it weaved all over the place. Looking at the zig-zag furrow, you'd have thought I was drunk. No, only stupid. I should have realized that an unequal yoke would drag the ox down rather than strengthen the sheep.

Child
Yoke How did we ever get the idea that an unequal marriage would bring the pagan to repentance? Sure, occasionally a nonbeliever comes to faith in God, but this is rare. All of the time, the "yoke" of raising children the right way is born by the believing partner alone, and that yoke gets heavy quickly! Soon it is abandoned and neither partner walks with God.

Ratio Since coming to your country I have learned that the Singapore church has a great imbalance of sexes, with far more females than males. In fact, some churches have 2 or 3 marriageable aged women for every man. This has led many Christian women to feel forced to marry unbelieving spouses despite what Scripture says.

- Help What can be said to this? As a married priest myself, I recognize the need to show compassion in this area. Perhaps those of us who are married are partly at fault. Do we see the need of singles for genuine fellowship with married adults? My wife has helped here by often inviting singles to our home. They are too often shunned by families.
- Bible Despite the ratios, God's word has not changed. He prohibits the marriage of Christians to non-Christians, and He does so for our fulfillment. He knows that a single person in His will is always happier than a married person out of His will. Just a few weeks ago a single Singaporean woman over age 50 told me, "I still want to get married, but I'm not going to compromise God's standards to do it." May her tribe increase!
- M.I.
OXO
OOO I should point out, though, that my grief at the intermarriage actually went beyond husband-wife relationships. My point was that any pagan influence allowed in the home can destroy the entire assembly as well as the individual home. When we allow ungodly forces to work within our homes, we plant the seeds of destruction for the whole godly community. Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!
- Temple You see, our Israelite community thought that after the temple was rebuilt, our stability would be safeguarded. But I discovered that putting security in a building is a very dangerous thing. It is the *people* that makes up the community of God, not the structure!
- "No Pagan
S
here" In my short sojourn in your land, I have noticed a peculiar thing among those calling themselves Christians. Many would never marry a pagan, many even say they would never even allow a pagan to enter their homes. But I know that there are literally hundreds of murders, numerous incidents of sexual immorality, and an abundance of pagan philosophies within countless Christian Singaporean homes!
- T.V. Many here do not believe me, but it is true. This can be observed any day in a little box inside the living room of nearly every home. What a strange name—"living room"—for a place where so much *dying* takes place! The kind of people whom Christian parents would never invite for dinner are allowed to have free reign on this picture window. Many images like "Power Rangers," "Care Bears," and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" direct children to tap into themselves for power rather than rely on the Lord.
- Advert. I hear some say that the picture box does not affect people's behaviour since everyone knows it is not real. Tell that to the peddlers who sell their wares between scenes and listen to them laugh! They believe that the picture box changes your values or they would never spend so many shekels to try to convince you to buy.
- Control Who will control the picture box? It has had such a tight grip on some families that they have had to rid their home of it. Others have been able to control it, only exposing themselves to those people whom they *would* invite over to their home in person. I have even heard of some who place Paul's standards in Philippians 4:8 on a card on top of the box: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." Good idea.
- Others What other pagan influences in your home slowly unravel spiritual fabric like a

pagan wife would? Can what I hear about Ouiji boards be true? Some Christians invite evil spirits into their home through these so-called games?

And is it really true that Christians will actually pay for demonic looking toys and then give them to their children? Mighty Morphine Power Rangers

Is it true that some household servants teach even Christian children to pray to a woman called Mary? Where are our standards? When are we going to draw the line on paganism in our homes so we can truly become godly?

Recently a Christian mother I know turned down an excellent opportunity to live in a beautiful home at a wonderful price. Why did she pass it up? She learned that a godless boy in a Christian family lived next door. She figured that since he had convinced other boys into evil then he may do the same with her own boys. God honoured her commitment and provided another house for her family.

Concl. Will we allow paganism into our homes? I pray we will not! Whether through marriage, friends, servants, or even games or a pagan picture box. The whole Israelite community was grieved at its sin of inviting disaster upon the land. With us Jews, individual sin became family sin which became community sin which nearly obliterated our race. It is the same with you. But you can learn from the mistakes of my people. I know you will.

Outline of the Monologue

- I. INTRO: I am Ezra the priest.
- II. BKGD: My story takes place during the post-exilic era.
- III. TEXT: I was grieved to hear of intermarriages.
- IV. WHY: There are many reasons why intermarriage is wrong—the chief is its corporate nature.
- V. APPL: Intermarriage is wrong for you too.
- VI. M.I.: Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!

Preliminary Questions

Verses Questions

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?
 Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?
 Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

- 1 Were the people who intermarried those who came with Ezra? (No, they were different than the priests and Levites since they separated themselves from them in v. 1; they were probably other godly leaders concerned about the issue which had affected 113 other leaders)
 or were they other Jews who had already lived in the land for 80 years? (We don't know if they were new or not)
 How long had Ezra's people been back before he discovered this sin? (7:9 vs. 10:9 shows it was about five months)
 Why did the leaders tell Ezra of the sin instead of someone else? (He had enough credibility to motivate the people to discipline their own leaders)
 What were the detestable practices of the Canaanites?
 What does it mean that they "have not kept themselves separate"?

IdæB; means to "be divided, separate" (BDB 95c 1a) and is used of God dividing the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4) and by Ezra concerning separation from pagan peoples (of Jews who had remained in the land or else of Gentiles; cf. Num. 9:14) to eat the Passover (6:21). Besides setting apart Israel as a whole (10:11; Neh. 9:2; Lev. 20:24), it's also used of setting apart the Levites to God for special service (Num. 8:14). Israel was to experience the same problem only 28 years later under Nehemiah (13:23f. in 430 BC; cf. BKC, 694).

Weren't some of these peoples already destroyed by this time? (yes—all but the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians, but the text says that the people participated in practices like these now extinct groups)

- 2 Was it only pagan women brought into Israel? (apparently) no men? Is this really serious?
 What does it mean to "mingle the holy race"? (The Messianic line was endangered)
 Were the pagan wives in addition to Jewish wives (polygamy)?
- 3 Why did Ezra destroy his clothes? What would be a similar modern action?
 Why did he pull out his hair? How does this compare with Nehemiah?
- 4 What was Ezra's action "sitting appalled" communicating?
- 5-15 Why did Ezra pray publicly instead of rebuking the people publicly?
 What does he pray? What is left unsaid?
- 6 How were their sins so high, given that they were the faithful remnant who returned?
 Were the sins referred to only those of intermarriage?
- 7 Who were these kings and what did they do to Israel? What would be a modern parallel?
- 8 Who were the remnant? How did they receive relief?

Tentative Subject/Complement Statements or M.I.s

I experienced some unique challenges in communicating Ezra 9. One was to make this passage (which deals with the sin of intermarriage) relevant to singles as well as marrieds. Another task was to address both the individual and corporate aspects noted in the passage.

The following ideas were proposed and then critiqued later on in the parentheses:

Get paganism out of your home! (But this deals only with the individual aspect without attention to the corporate dimension.)

Respond to sin with prayer and remorse. (But I don't think the intent is to set Ezra up as a model of how to deal with sin, is it?)

Never marry non-Christians. (Probably also overemphasizes the individual aspect and also limits the idea too narrowly so it only speaks to singles.)

Guard your relationship with your spouse. (No, since in the following chapter we see them separating from their spouses! Besides, this won't speak to the singles.)

Don't allow compromise into your faith—be pure! (But this deals only with the individual aspect without attention to the corporate dimension.)

The church is only as strong as its homes. (Wording weak and doesn't meet needs of singles.)

Compromise within church families will eventually destroy the whole church. (Wording weak, doesn't meet needs of singles, and more negative in tone than necessary.)

Individual purity is necessary for corporate purity. (More accurate, but not catchy enough.)

If you want the church to succeed, you better start with the influences on your own life. (Too long.)

Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first!

Possible Illustrations

Cannibalizing abortions in China (parallel to Canaanite practices)

Ratio of 3:1 regarding single Christian women to men in Singapore

Elephantine community destroyed through intermarriage (NIV Study Bible on 9:1)

Unholy mixtures always contaminate the pure rather than purify the contaminated (red ink in water)

—second law of thermodynamics applies in Christian homes

Rebecca Young's comment: "I will either marry a believer or remain single the rest of my life"

Just this week Yassar Arafat's wife made an interesting comment in regard to their baby due in a few weeks. She said, "Yassar won't have time to give the baby its bottle, but I'm sure that just seeing his child will make him more serene, even if it's only for a few minutes."

Examples of Pagan Influence in Christian Homes

T.V.—Power Rangers, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, violence, sex

Friends (Ann declining to live next to boy of bad influence)

Ouiji boards

Maids who encourage children to pray to Mary

Intermarriage Under Ezra

Ezra 9

Exegetical Outline

Prologue: Zerubbabel ended the exile by returning with 50,000 Jews, who built the temple. Almost 60 years later, after an initial trip (?) to explore needs in Jerusalem (7:8), Ezra returned to Babylon and brought 5000 Israelites back to Jerusalem. Chapter 8 records that they had just returned and offered sacrifices. On the heels of this great occasion, bad news about intermarriage came to Ezra. This was a clear violation of God's law.

Exegetical Idea 1: The reason Ezra lamented Israel's intermarriages was because pagan influences were destroying Israel's witness as a unique covenant people.

Exegetical Idea 2: The way Ezra responded to Israel's intermarriages was by public weeping and confession of sin.

- I. (1-2) The reason the problem of intermarriage was noted to Ezra by some Jewish leaders was because this endangered the messianic lineage.
 - A. (1a) The leaders approached Ezra with the bad news.
 - B. (1b-2) The bad news was that Israel's leaders and people had endangered the Messianic line by intermarrying pagan neighboring peoples with detestable practices.
- II. (3-15) The response of Ezra to the intermarriage threat to Israel's existence was humble, public remorse.
 - A. (3-5) Ezra's non-verbal response was to tear his clothes, pull out his some hair, and sit appalled in a public place.
 - B. (6-15) Ezra's verbal response was a public prayer of guilt, remorse, and confession of the sin.
 1. (6-7) Ezra notes God's discipline of exile through pagan kings for Israel's sins.
 2. (8-9) Ezra notes God's grace through restoration from captivity.
 3. (10-15) Ezra confessed the people's sin of intermarriage.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form)

Introduce Subject: How should we respond to threats to our spiritual convictions?

- I. Ezra grieved over pagan wives who polluted the purity of the Jewish community. [Israelites who brought paganism into Jerusalem through foreign wives caused Ezra sorrow.]
- II. Want a pure church? Weed out pagan influences in your own life first! (Main Idea)

My Aborted Attempt at Normal Sermon on Ezra 9...

1. Life used to be very public in our world.
 - a. Transportation being limited, our grandparents didn't meet new people as often as we do.
 - b. People used to stay in the same job or trade their whole life—even in the same shop!
2. But today we live in an increasingly private world.
 - a. Most of the people you'll see this week don't know your name.
 - b. Accountability is so low that a Singaporean businessman can travel to Bangkok, have an afternoon fling with someone he'll never see again, and be in bed with his wife that night.
3. As a result, people feel defensive about preachers talking about what they do in their own home.
 - a.
4. But it is what happens in our homes that molds us and reveals us to be who we really are.
 - a.
5. Could an infiltration of paganism be occurring in your home right now?
 - a.

I.

A. Intermarriage was a clear violation of God's law:

Genesis 24:3 Abraham made Isaac swear to never marry a Canaanite woman

Genesis 26:34-35 Esau spitefully disregarded this by marrying a Hittite.

Genesis 28:1-2, 8 Jacob traveled all the way back to Mesopotamia for a legitimate wife (Rachel)

Exodus 34:16 No treaties or intermarriage to prevent idolatry

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 Do not marry with [the peoples of the lands around you]

Deuteronomy 20:17-18 Destroy the nations or be lead into their sin

Judges 3:5ff. Israel intermarried

1 Kings 11 Solomon

1.
 - a.
2.
 - a.