

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE ORIGIN STORY OF JESUS

RLJ-1878

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PART 83: PAGAN WIVES

RUDE SURPRISE

The joy of being in Jerusalem and partaking in a thanksgiving service to the Lord did not last long when the political leaders of Judah told Ezra that many of the men had compromised by taking pagan wives. **Ezra 9:1-2; Deuteronomy 7:1-6**

Ezra's world collapsed when he heard the bad news. He had worked diligently to prepare himself as a priest and was devastated to learn that the remnant which had returned to Judah was already spiritually contaminated. He feared that God would slam the people of Judah and evict them from the land again. He was so distraught that he tore his clothes, ripped out the hair on his head, and plucked his facial hair until it was gone. Then Ezra sat down in dumbfounded silence. **Ezra 9:3-4**

When it was time for the evening sacrifice, Ezra got up only to fall upon his knees to plead with the Lord, completely overcome with grief. His great concern was that God would change His mind, punish the people, and expel them a second time from Judah. **verses 5-15**

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

A large number of men, women and children gathered because they heard about the bad news delivered to Ezra. Fear gripped them as they thought about being chastised a second time by God. They wanted to repent before it was too late. **Ezra 10:1**

The Holy Spirit moved upon Shechaniah, who proposed to seek God, making a new covenant with the Lord, and remove all the pagan wives and subsequent children from Judah. **verses 2-4**

King Artaxerxes I of Persia had commissioned Ezra to be the highest judge in Judah and he took immediate action. **verse 5**

Ezra went into a fast after initiating the cleansing. **verse 6**

THE PROCLAMATION

Since Ezra had initiated legal action, the Jews living in Judah were now required to obey the decree. **verses 7-8**

The men of Judah realized they had to comply with Ezra's decree despite the heavy downpour of rain on Jerusalem. Everyone gathered in the street in front of the temple and trembled in the cold rain as they pondered how to solve the intermarriage mess which they had created. **verse 9**

Ezra instructed the men to repent and separate themselves from their pagan wives and the children they had with them. **verses 10-11**



The people responded that they were willing to do as Ezra commanded, but because of the rain and the fact that this process would undoubtedly take weeks, they wanted to set appointments with the priests and elders. **verses 12-14**

A special tribunal was set up to meet with each man who was unequally yoked. **verses 15-17**

It did not matter whether the men were priests, princes, or common men, they all agreed to put away their pagan wives and children. **verses 18-19; 44**

God forgave the men of Judah and the judgment from God was avoided.

SUMMARY

The Godhead could not go ahead with their plans for the future Messiah unless the returning Jews were cleansed of idolatry. Pagan wives had proven to be a deadly spiritual disease in the past. The worse offender was King Solomon and the kings that followed continued in the habit of taking more than one wife – many of them pagan.

1 Kings 11:1-4

The remnant that returned to Judah were living under a theocracy ruled by the Mosaic law. The commandments given to Moses created a platform for the future Messiah (Jesus) to build His church under the Second Covenant. This goes a long way to explain Ezra's actions and the need for holiness among God's people.

There is no need for a temple or sacrifices today because Jesus was the final sacrifice. This is what separates the First Covenant issued by Jesus from Mount Sinai with the Second Covenant established solely by God the Father and God the Son at the cross, extending grace and forgiveness to the human race.

As Christians we should obey the commandment that God delivered to the Hebrews not to marry pagans (unbelievers). **Deuteronomy 7:3-6**

The apostle Paul confirmed this message. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1**

Paul stated how the matter should be resolved if you have married an unbeliever. **1 Corinthians 7:1-16**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?

Appendix A

KINGS OF BABYLON

Nebuchadnezzar II reigned from 605-562 BC.

Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) ruled from 562-560 BC until he was overthrown and killed by Neriglissar.

Neriglissar reigned from 560-556 BC. He was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters.

Labashi-Marduk was the son of Neriglissar. He was overthrown within one to three months when he began to reign in 556 BC.

Nabonidus ruled from 556 BC until 539 BC when the Babylonian were conquered by Cyrus II.

Belshazzar served as co-regent with his father, Nabonidus, who went on a pilgrimage.

KINGS OF PERSIA

Cyrus II reigned from 550-530 BC.

Cambyses II inherited the throne and reigned for 8 years from 530-522 BC.

Bardiya replaced his brother in 522 BC. but reigned for less than a year until he was overthrown by Darius.

Darius I would go on to rule from 522-486 BC.

Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) inherited the throne from his father and reigned from 486-465 B.C. He famously invaded Greece with a large army. King Leonidas and his famous 300 Spartans delayed his progress at Thermopylae and then the Persians were soundly defeated by Themistocles at Salamis. Esther was famously chosen to be his queen sometime after he returned home.

Artaxerxes I reigned from 465-424 BC.

Xerxes II briefly reigned in 424 BC. for 45 days until he was assassinated by his half-brother, Sogdianus.

Sogdianus reigned from 424-423 BC. until he was murdered by Darius II six months later.

Darius II reigned from 423-404 BC

Artaxerxes II was the son of Darius II. He reigned from 404-358 BC.