

# Just Say A Few "Hail Mary's..."

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THIS MATTER, I TORE MY GARMENT AND MY ROBE, AND PULLED SOME OF THE HAIR FROM MY HEAD AND MY BEARD, AND SAT DOWN APPALLED.**

**~EZRA 9:3 (NASB)**

## **1) A Sad State Of Affairs**

- A) Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem has carried a certain dread of "inquiry" into the lives of the Jews who are re-established in Israel (cf. Ezra 7:14). The tone turns decidedly dark as Ezra is sought by some of the key Jewish leadership (9:1).
  
- B) The Jewish leaders come to Ezra and share a sad legacy of intermarriage (9:2) with the people's of the land (Canaanites..., 9:1\*). This was in direct opposition to God's command for purity (Deuteronomy 7:1-6).
  
- C) There is a sad irony in Ezra's reference to Israel as a "holy race" (lit. "holy seed," 9:2), that what God had planted was being corrupted to the point of becoming dangerously indistinguishable from the rest of the world.

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\*The Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Ammonites were no longer in existence at this time... the narrative seeks to reestablish in Ezra's day the "conquest" of the Promised Land. The otherwise inexplicable addition of "the Egyptians" to this list strengthens the reader's perception that the list is a "flashback" to the similar situation that existed at the time of the first exodus (cf. Exodus 3:8, 13:5; Deuteronomy 7:1, 20:17). *Ezra-Nehemiah, Interpretation Commentary Series*, Mark A. Thronveit, Page 51).

- D) Israel's very purpose (a nation of blessing to bless others, cf. Genesis 12:1-3) was being threatened, which was a threat to the entire world. Worst of all, the overt sin had infiltrated the leadership of the Jewish community (9:2).

## 2) Ezra's Response To Sin

- A) Ezra responds to the sad news by publicly tearing his clothing (a response of mourning, cf. Genesis 37:34; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 19:1; Isaiah 37:1) and tearing out his own hair from his head and face (9:3). Ezra was "appalled" (lit., devastated, made desolate, in horror, astonished).
- B) Ezra took sin in the community **personally**. Ezra was not himself guilty of intermarriage, but he mourned personally (9:3-4) for the sin because Israel was a "holy race".
- C) Certainly, this response to sin amongst God's people is even more pronounced for the followers of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:9-13)! The call for Christians is to remain as a "holy race" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:14-15).
- D) Ezra prays to God in humility (begging) and **takes full responsibility** for the sin of the people, of whom he is a part (9:5-7). Ezra **accepts God's discipline** for sin.
- E) Ezra recognizes that the only hope for salvation/restoration is in God's hand. **Salvation is God's to give**, not Ezra's to demand (9:8-9).
- F) Ezra **confesses his sin** and the sin of all the people to God. Ezra is specific and detailed in his confession of sin, noting that even though he is confessing, God can still destroy Israel because of their sin (9:10-14).
- G) Ezra recognizes his total depravity, and throws himself on God's mercy, **pleading for genuine forgiveness** (9:15).