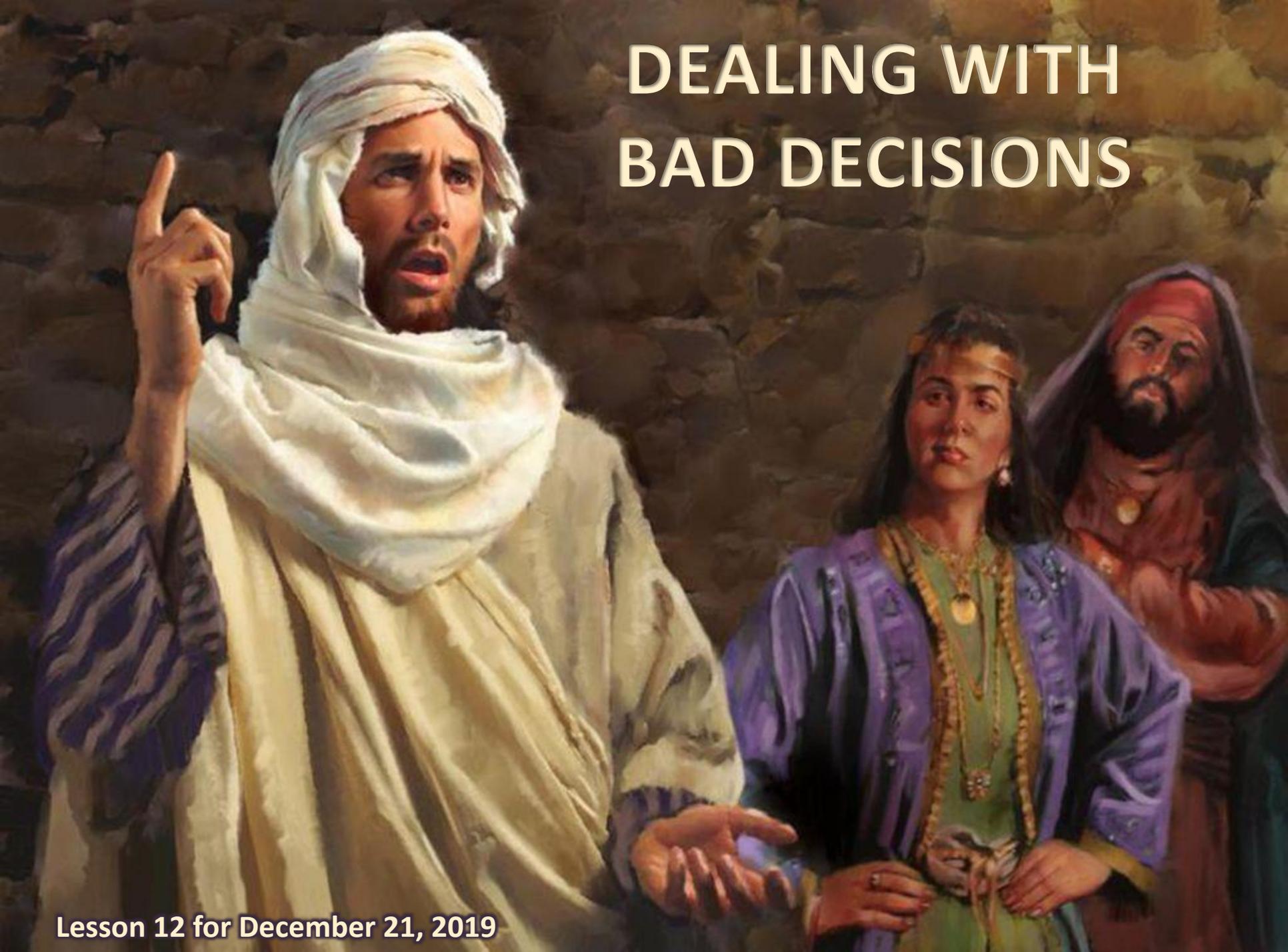


DEALING WITH BAD DECISIONS



Lesson 12 for December 21, 2019

After returning to Jerusalem, the people of the remnant defiled themselves by marrying idolatrous people.

Both Ezra and Nehemiah confronted this situation.

Let's study how they acted, so we can learn how to confront this kind of problems today.

 **Ezra:**

 Reaction. Ezra 9

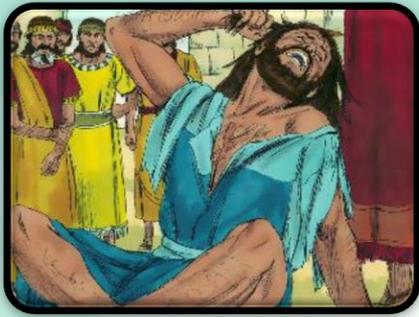
 Action. Ezra 10

 **Nehemiah:**

 Reaction. Nehemiah 13:23-25

 Action. Nehemiah 13:26-27

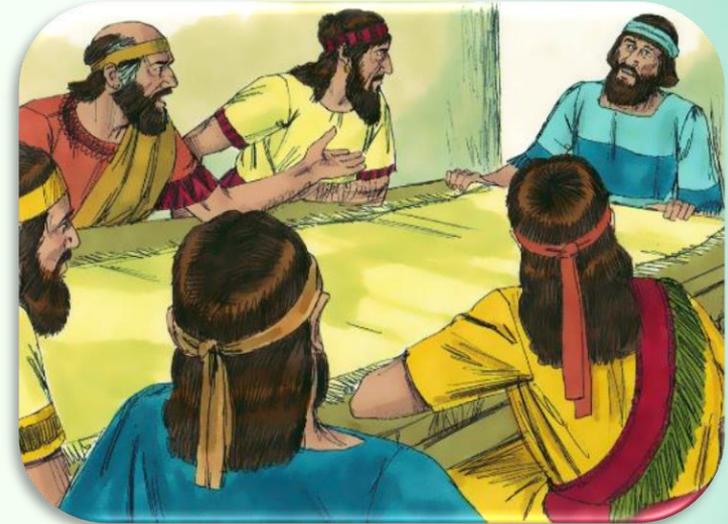
 **The problem today**



EZRA'S REACTION

"So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished." (Ezra 9:3)

Between Zerubbabel's time and Ezra's coming, the people of Israel married Canaanite people. The civil leaders reported this. Even the priests and Levites took part in these intermarriages which the law forbade.

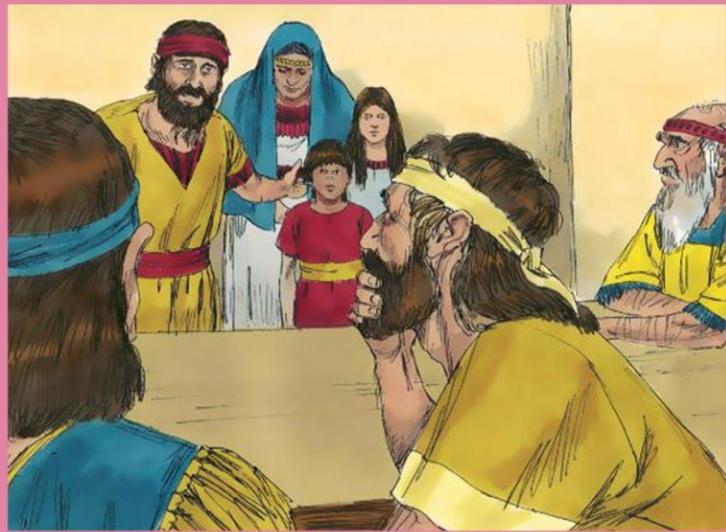


Ezra understood that this was one of the reasons why idolatry and moral decay had poured into the people. He got extremely sad.

He remained prostrated until the evening sacrifice. Then, he prayed and acknowledge before God that they had sinned because they had not separated from the pagan nations.

EZRA'S ACTION

"Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." (Ezra 10:3)

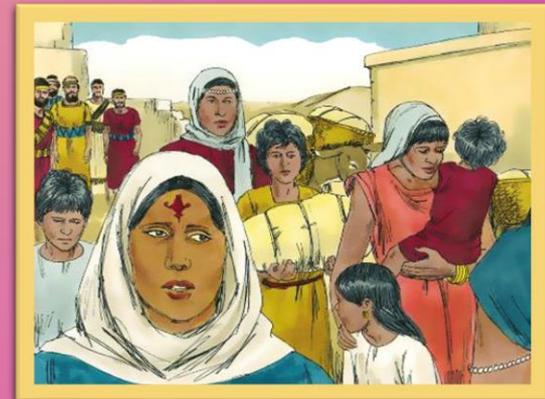


The investigation of this issue took several months, although only some of the families were involved (about four out of every one thousand marriages)

Which foreign women should be considered “pagan”? What were they teaching their children? Which was their influence in the family? The expelled women were not separated from their children or left abandoned.

The expression “put away” is not used as divorce, but as a marriage annulment. Those marriages were illegal because they had been forbidden by law.

God wants us to surrender our human nature to Him. Our commitment to God must be firm and steady, always putting Him first.



“With infinite patience and tact, and with a careful consideration for the rights and welfare of every individual concerned, Ezra and his associates strove to lead the penitent of Israel into the right way. Above all else, Ezra was a teacher of the law; and as he gave personal attention to the examination of every case, he sought to impress the people with the holiness of this law and the blessings to be gained through obedience.”

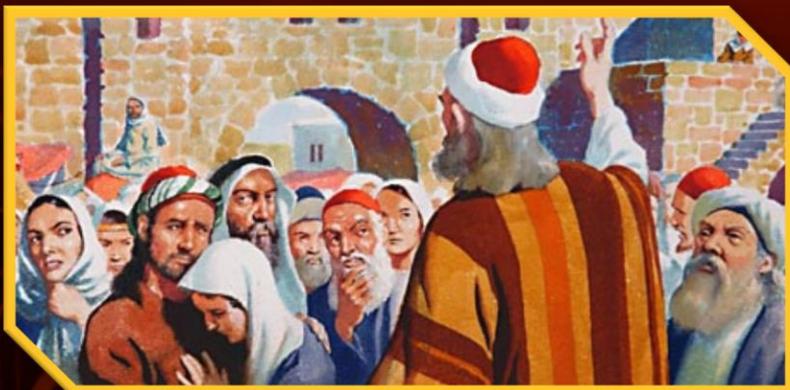
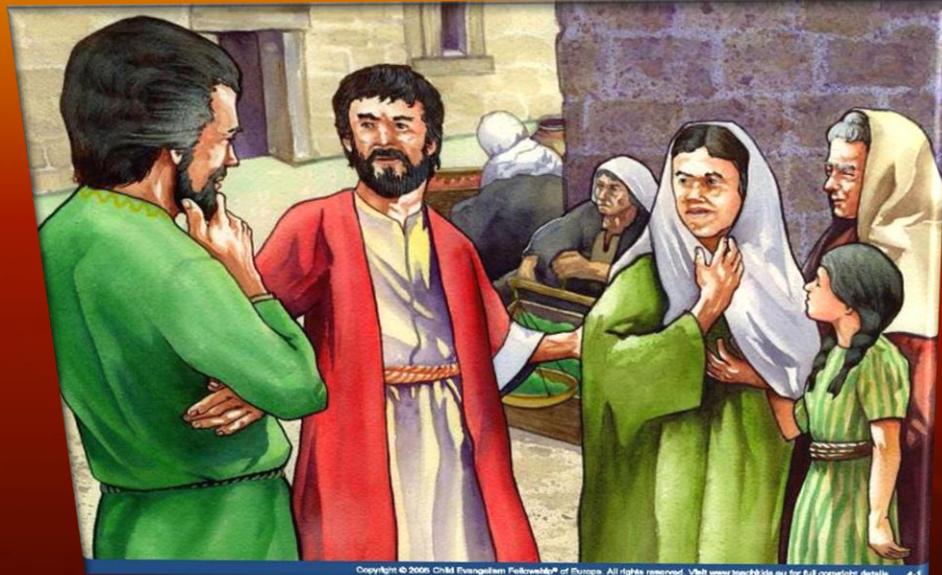
E.G.W. (Prophets and Kings, cp. 51, p. 622)

NEHEMIAH'S REACTION

"And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people." (Nehemiah 13:24)

The people had committed to stop marrying foreign women (Nehemiah 10:30). However, they did not do so when Nehemiah left.

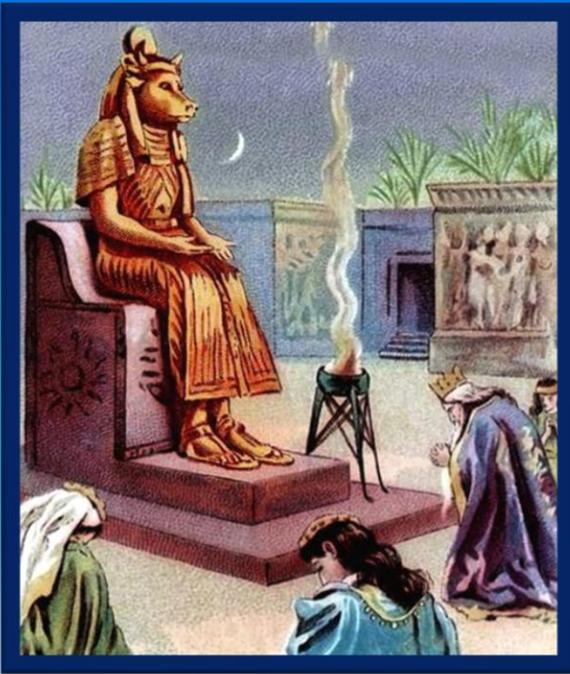
They probably married those women as their second wives. That's why half of their children spoke one language, and the other half spoke another.



The Word of God was written in Hebrew (the language of Judah), so those not speaking Hebrew were prone to abandon the faith. Nehemiah showed his indignation by using his civil power to punish some of them.

NEHEMIAH'S ACTION

"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin." (Nehemiah 13:26)



Moses
married
Zipporah,
Midianite



Salmon
married
Rahab,
Canaanite



Boaz
married
Ruth,
Moabite

Nehemiah explained why they shouldn't marry foreign women.

Some Israelites had married foreign women before, without considering it a sin.

This was not nationalism, but a religious issue. The problem or sin was to marry a person who has a different faith or does not believe in God.

If we are committed to God, we should seek a partner who encourages a mutual devotion for God.



THE PROBLEM TODAY

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)



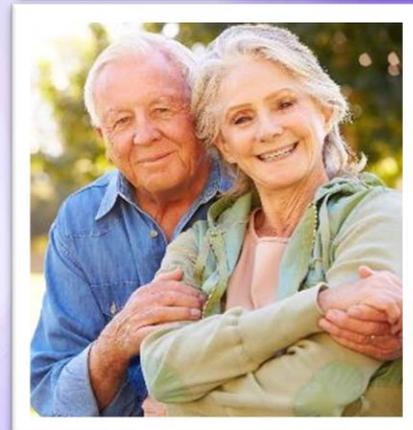
We must love God above all things and seek first the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:30; Matthew 6:33). We should consult Him before making a decision as important as marriage.



His advice is crystal clear: a non-believing partner will not help us grow spiritually but will tend to move us away from our faith.



However, Paul advised us to remain faithful to our non-believing partner, and not to break our marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).



We can be sure that God's grace is always available for everyone, no matter which wrong decisions we make.



“No one who fears God can without danger connect himself with one who fears Him not. ‘Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’ Amos 3:3. The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one’s principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God.”

E.G.W. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 174)