

Ezra and the Moravian Church

I recently read the Book of Ezra. The book tells us the story of the Jews return to Jerusalem and the surrounding area following the Babylonian Captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. In Chapter 9 of Ezra a serious problem emerges. Some of the Jews had married from among the surrounding tribal groups – the Canaanites, Hittites, Moabites, and others. This was forbidden because these “neighboring peoples” were involved in certain “detestable practices”. The worship of false gods had led to the Babylonian captivity. The concern was that this would happen again. Israel was to have no god other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the Creator and Redeemer of all. The Jews were not to inter-marry with those who worshipped false gods – those who worshipped other gods through acts of sexual immorality and child sacrifice.

The blame for this forbidden practice rested squarely on the Jewish leaders. Ezra 9:2 informs us that “the leaders and officials (had) led the way in this unfaithfulness”. Even the priests and Levites had failed to remain separate from the influence of “mingling” with those who worshiped other gods by taking wives from among those people. Some women had taken husbands from among these people as well.

Ezra is deeply grieved. In Ezra 9:3-6 we hear the words of Ezra. ‘When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the Lord my God and prayed: “I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.” Ezra’s prayer is quite lengthy. As Ezra is praying, we see the result. Ezra 10:1 reads, “While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing

himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly.”

A final action was taken by the faithful. They entered into a covenant with God. A list was made of those who had spouses from among these other people. They were “expelled” from the faithful and sent into exile.

Let us fast forward several 1000 years and speak of Moravia. Moravia is a province of the current Czech Republic and the birthplace of the Moravian church. But the Moravia I speak of today is here in the piedmont of North Carolina and elsewhere in America where the gospel has been preached for 100s of years by Moravians – but not so much today.

Moravia has fallen upon hard times. Leaders within the church and ministers within our churches no longer believe the Holy Scriptures to be holy - no more authoritative than the works of William Shakespeare or other writers. And there are those who no longer believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. There are issues related to sexual immorality within the church and clergy are supportive of this immorality. This issue is not being adequately addressed. This was an issue in the early Church which the Apostles addressed with vigor.

Moravia has fallen into sin, and as was true in the times of Ezra, religious leaders are responsible. Many Moravians have left Moravia for other destinations. Many of those who remain sit silently in the pews, too timid to speak. Moravia is on the verge of utter collapse.

I will share with you one last passage of scripture and make a few final comments. I will leave the rest to God the Holy Spirit.

Luke 9:26. Jesus is speaking. “Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

Moravia is collapsing because Moravians are ashamed of Jesus and of His words. How can Moravians expect to be accepted into heaven if they are

ashamed of Jesus and His words? I am not being judgmental by asking this question. I am no one's judge. I am simply quoting Jesus's words to you.

I leave you to think and pray about this. It is time for church members to stand up and make their voices heard. Speak to your ministers. Speak to those on the PEC. Write letters to these people. And pray that God would give Moravia strong leadership - men and women who truly believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and believe the Holy Scriptures to be authoritative in our lives. Let Moravia rid itself of sexual practices condemned in the Word of God. There is no place for such teachings in our churches.

Moravia is collapsing into ruin and it because Moravians are standing by watching the collapse. Where are the Moravians shedding tears? Where are the Moravians praying? Where are the Moravians falling on their faces pleading before God? They are simply watching as Moravia crumbles.

“Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

May God help us and may God save Moravia.