

Ted Cruz: An Ezra for This Hour in America

As I was preparing to head out to Texas to interview Senator Ted Cruz for an upcoming magazine article, I did more than study his voting record and where he stands on hot-button issues. I prayed about God's will in what many are calling the most important presidential election in the nation's history.

As I prayed over Cruz, I heard the Lord say "Ezra." I studied Ezra's mission, reading the book of the Bible he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I also studied his actions in book Nehemiah, also penned by the Spirit.

After much prayer, reflection and study, I believe that the Lord wants to raise up Cruz, 45, as an Ezra in this generation. I believe the Lord wills to use this Cuban-immigrant-pastor's kid-turned-United-States-senator to call the nation to repentance and lead America to re-covenant with God.

Who Was Ezra?

In case you don't read much from this prophet, scribe and priest, he was one of the key leaders to leave Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem, which was sitting in ruins during his ministry. Although America is not in visible ruins and most of our churches are still standing, the discerning eye can see spiritual ruin from sea to shining sea as many predict a financial Armageddon is inevitable.

It's important to note that God did not work through one man alone to bring an awakening to Israel. God raised up restorers of the walls and repairers of the breach. He raised up interceding prophets. He raised up builders—those willing to do hard work day and night. And he raised up governmental leaders who were touched by the Spirit of God to cooperate

with His plans and purposes at a specific hour in history.

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King Artaxerxes offered permission and provision to Nehemiah, who led the restoration of Jerusalem's walls (see Neh. 2). King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild the temple Zerubbabel and Joshua led work to restore the temple as Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the builders (see Ezra 5: 1-2). Ezra's portion was to ultimately bring a spiritual revival to God's people by restoring a reverential fear of Jehovah's law and a heartfelt worship for one one true and living God who had so many times before delivered them from bondage.

What Ezra Really Did

Essentially, Ezra taught the people of God the Word of God. He set out to teach the Israelites, who had been carried away into Babylonian captivity, the law of God. Ezra did not set out to do this by his own smarts, strengths or timing.

Like Nehemiah, Ezra also rose up in the reign of Artaxerxes. The Bible describes him as "a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses, given by the Lord God of Israel" and says "the hand of the Lord his God was upon him" and later reiterates that "the good hand of his God was upon him" (see Ezra 7).

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he wasted no time on his assignment: "Because Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, he was doing so and teaching the statutes and judgments in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). With the walls and temple rebuilt, the family leaders and temple servants started returning to Jerusalem and sacrifices were made unto Jehovah (Ezra 8).

Then comes a turning point. Ezra learned that God's people, "practice the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites" (Ezra 9:1).

“When I heard this, I tore my clothes and my robe, plucked out the hair of my head and from my beard, and sat down astonished. Because of the vile behavior of those who had been in exile, every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered to me, but I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice” (Ezra 9:3-4).

A Call to Repentance

At the evening sacrifice Ezra rose up from his heaviness and, despite having his clothes and robe torn, he knelt on his knees and stretched out his hands in prayer to God and started leading the nation in repentance:

“O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, because our iniquities have expanded over our heads and our wrongdoing has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers until this day, we have been in a great guilt. It is because of our iniquities that we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered—by the sword, by captivity, by spoil, and by being shamed—into the hand of the kings of the lands. This day is like that, too” (Ezra 9:6-7).

This repentance goes on through verse 15. Then something happened. 2 Chronicles 7:14 happened.

“Now while Ezra prayed and confessed, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large congregation of men, women, and children gathered around him from Israel, for the people too wept bitterly. Shekaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra, ‘We have acted with vile unfaithfulness against our God and have wedded foreign women from the people of the land, yet there is now hope in Israel concerning this. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to sever relations with all the women and their children according to the counsel of my lord and those who tremble at the commandment of our God. May this be done in accordance with the law. Arise, for this matter is

your responsibility. But we are standing with you. Be courageous and act!'" (Ezra 10:1-4).

Cruz is Believing for a Great Awakening

The Israelites confessed their sins, repented, and immediately started making the wrong things right. We get more of the story in Nehemiah 8. Ezra reads the book of the Law of Moses before all the people.

"When Ezra blessed the Lord as the great God, all the people responded 'Amen, Amen!' By lifting up their hands as they bowed their heads, they worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6). "They read from the book, from the Law of God, with interpretation, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8).

And the people wept but joy followed as true spiritual revival hit Israel.

"Then he said to them, 'Go your way. Eat the fat, drink the sweet drink, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, 'Hush! Because today is holy you should stop being so sorrowful.' Then all the people went to eat, to drink, to send portions, and to enjoy a great celebration because they had understood the words declared to them" (Neh. 8:10-12).

Jerusalem, the Holy City, was restored. America can be restored. We may be on the brink of utter disaster, but it's not too late—and Cruz is proclaiming that reality. When I sat down with him in Texas, I specifically asked him if he was believing for another Great Awakening.

"To turn America around today, I believe we need another great awakening, and I believe it's happening," Cruz told me. "It's one of the reasons I'm so optimistic and so encouraged as I

travel the country. People are waking up. They're realizing that what we're doing doesn't make any sense. They're realizing that we're losing who we are, forgetting who we are."