

Insights From Ezra

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Insights From Ezra

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Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....4
Ezra.....7

Ezra

- Jeremiah prophesied that Cyrus would issue a proclamation to build a second temple (Ezra 1:1).
- In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, he issued a proclamation to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1). The reason Cyrus did this was because God stirred up his spirit.
- God has control over the actions of kings (Ezra 1:1).
- God decides who reigns over the kingdoms of this world (Ezra 1:2). The people who are in authority are there because God put them there.
- Cyrus did more than just allow the Jews to begin work on a second temple. He commanded the Jews to work on it, and he commanded the people of his kingdom to give them resources to help construct it (Ezra 1:4).
- There were a few Jews who returned to Judah and Jerusalem, but there were many who didn't return (Ezra 1:5).
- There are times when God stirs up people's spirits so that they'll carry out His will (Ezra 1:5).
- The Jews who went to Jerusalem to begin constructing the second temple didn't travel empty handed. They brought with them many precious and valuable items (Ezra 1:6).
- The vessels from the first temple had been taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1:7). He put those vessels in the temple of the idols that he worshiped.
- The treasurer of Persia gave the vessels from the first temple to the prince of Judah (Ezra 1:8). The reason they

were returned was so the Jews could put them in the second temple.

- There were priests, Levites, and singers who accompanied Zerubbabel to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:36, 40, 41).
- Some of the people who accompanied Zerubbabel to Jerusalem couldn't prove that they were Jews. This is because they didn't have a family tree that showed their ancestry (Ezra 2:59).
- The children of Barzillai were so named because their ancestor took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai. They were named after her (Ezra 2:61).
- There were some people who claimed to be priests but couldn't prove that they were the descendants of Aaron (Ezra 2:62). For that reason they were removed from the priesthood.
- The Tirshatha (governor) said that the priests couldn't eat of the most holy things until their priesthood was verified by the Urim and the Thummim (Ezra 2:63).
- The Urim and the Thummim were still in use after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 2:63).
- The group which traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem consisted of 42,360 people. It included 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys (Ezra 2:66-67).
- Some of the leaders of the Jews gave an offering for the temple once they reached Jerusalem (Ezra 2:68). They gave 61,000 drams of gold (Ezra 2:69). A dram is about 1/16th of an ounce, so this was about 3,800 ounces.
- The leaders of the Jews also gave 5,000 pounds of silver and 100 priestly garments (Ezra 2:69).

- The priests worked with Jeshua to build the altar of God (Ezra 3:2). This means that before the second temple was built, the altar of God was rebuilt.
- When the Jews rebuilt the altar, they were afraid (Ezra 3:3). This is because they were surrounded by enemies who wished them harm.
- The morning and evening offering was offered to God (Ezra 3:3).
- The Jews kept the feast of tabernacles (which was to be kept in the seventh month) (Ezra 3:4).
- Although people began to offer sacrifices to God, the foundation of the temple had not yet been laid (Ezra 3:6).
- The Jews gave money to masons and carpenters in order to help build the second temple (Ezra 3:7). They also donated food, drink, and oil.
- The Jews hired people from Zidon and Tyre to help build the second temple (Ezra 3:7).
- The Jews obtained cedar trees from Lebanon to help build the second temple (Ezra 3:7). The cedars from Lebanon were provided by Cyrus and transported to Jerusalem by sea.
- The person who commanded the use of music in the temple, to praise the Lord, was David (Ezra 3:10).
- In the temple, trumpets and cymbals were used to praise the Lord (Ezra 3:10).
- The laying of the foundation of the second temple was treated as a special event, and celebrated with music (Ezra 3:10). When the foundation was laid, the priests

and the Levites sang together and praised the Lord.

- The laying of the foundation was a demonstration of God's goodness and mercy (Ezra 3:11).
- When the foundation was laid, the people shouted with a great shout (Ezra 3:11).
- Those who were old enough to have seen the first temple wept when the foundation was laid, and were deeply grieved (Ezra 3:12). This is because the second temple wasn't as grand as the first temple, so to them it represented a significant loss.
- Those who weren't old enough to have seen the first temple shouted for joy (Ezra 3:12-13). The shouting was heard from a long distance away.
- The adversaries of the Jews lived in the land (Ezra 4:4). They weakened the Jews and created problems.
- The enemies of the Jews didn't want a temple to be built to the God of Israel (Ezra 4:1-2).
- At first, the enemies of the Jews tried to stop the construction of the temple by joining the work. However, Zerubbabel didn't allow this (Ezra 4:3). He said that Cyrus had given the commandment to rebuild the temple to the Jews, and the Jews were going to be the ones to build it.
- The adversaries of the Jews hired counselors to stop the Jews from building the second temple (Ezra 4:5). They then fought against the temple project for years.
- The foreign nations that were in Israel when the Jews returned hated the Jews and didn't want the second temple to be built (Ezra 4:1-10).

- The adversaries who wrote a letter to Artaxerxes lied about what the Jews were doing. In order to stop them from building the temple of the Lord, they falsely claimed that the Jews were engaged in rebellion against the king (Ezra 4:12).
- The adversaries of the Jews accused the king of sending a bunch of Jews to them. They claimed the Jews didn't belong in the land, and were bothering the people who already lived there by stirring up rebellion against the king (Ezra 4:12).
- There are times when wicked people use lies to stop the worship of God. They claim they're trying to stop one thing when in reality they're fighting against something else (Ezra 4:12).
- The adversaries of the Jews claimed that if the Jews rebuilt Jerusalem they would then rebel against the king, which would damage the revenue that the king depended on (Ezra 4:13).
- The adversaries of the Jews were receiving funding from the king (Ezra 4:14).
- The adversaries of the Jews claimed they were sending this letter for the good of the king, when in reality they just hated the Jews and hated God (Ezra 4:1-14). This means there are times when wicked people lie about their motives in order to fight against the people of God.
- The adversaries of the Jews claimed that the current generation of Jews should be punished because of things that former generations had done a long time ago (Ezra 4:15).
- There are times when wicked people claim that people

should be punished for the deeds of their ancestors (Ezra 4:15).

- The king commanded the enemies of the Jews to stop the Jews from rebuilding Jerusalem (Ezra 4:21). He said that if Jerusalem was rebuilt it would bring damage to him.
- There are times when the wicked are successful in using lies against God's people. Sometimes those lies work and the wicked are able to accomplish their goals (Ezra 4:23). This means the people of God don't always win.
- Although the king only commanded the Jews to stop rebuilding Jerusalem, the enemies of the Jews used the letter to stop them from rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4:24). They did this even though the king said nothing about the temple, and the letters didn't address the temple at all.
- The work on the second temple stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius (Ezra 4:24).
- Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews after the adversaries of the Jews stopped the construction of the second temple (Ezra 5:1).
- Zerubbabel and Jeshua restarted the construction of the second temple (Ezra 5:2). The reason this happened was because of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.
- The leaders of the Jews couldn't stop working on the second temple (Ezra 5:5). This is because the eye of God was upon them.
- There are times when God compels people to perform a work (Ezra 5:5).
- The reason the first temple was destroyed was because

the Jews provoked God to wrath (Ezra 5:12). The Jews understood that it was their fault the first temple had been destroyed. They also understood that God was the one who gave them over to Nebuchadnezzar and exiled them to Babylon.

- Darius commanded that the temple construction project be left alone and allowed to continue (Ezra 6:6). He also commanded the governor of Judah to pay the expenses of the construction project so the work wouldn't be hindered.
- Darius also commanded that the priests at Jerusalem be given animals, wheat, salt, wine, and oil each day for sacrifices to God (Ezra 6:9).
- Darius wanted the priests to pray for the life of the king and his sons (Ezra 6:10).
- Darius decreed that anyone who changed his decree should have their house destroyed and be put to death (Ezra 6:11).
- Darius prayed that God would destroy all kings and people who sought to destroy the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra 6:12).
- There are times when God uses prophecies and prophets to motivate people to action (Ezra 6:14).
- God worked through kings to accomplish His will (Ezra 6:14).
- There was much rejoicing when the house of God was dedicated (Ezra 6:16).
- The Jews kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month (Ezra 6:19).

- In order to celebrate the Passover, the Jews had to purify themselves. They had to separate themselves from the unclean and wicked practices of the pagans who lived around them (Ezra 6:21).
- The Jews kept the feast of unleavened bread (Ezra 6:22).
- God made the Jews joyful (Ezra 6:22).
- The reason the king of Assyria helped the Jews was because God turned the king's heart toward the Jews (Ezra 6:22). This means God has control over the hearts of kings.
- There are times when God works through pagans in order to accomplish His will and finish His work (Ezra 6:22).
- Ezra could prove that he was a direct descendant of Aaron (Ezra 7:5).
- The reason Ezra and his group were able to safely travel from Babylon to Jerusalem was because God protected them (Ezra 7:9).
- Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of God (Ezra 7:10).
- Ezra was authorized to collect whatever freewill offerings he could find in the entire province of Babylon (Ezra 7:16).
- The king gave Ezra permission to do whatever he thought best with the money that was left over, according to the will of God (Ezra 7:18).
- The king told Ezra that if he needed anything else for the temple, the king would pay for it out of his treasure house (Ezra 7:20).

- Ezra was authorized to enforce the law of God in the land of Judah (Ezra 7:26).
- The reason Artaxerxes wrote this letter and made these decrees was because God put it into his heart (Ezra 7:27). This means God has the power to put things into the heart of rulers.
- Before Ezra made the trip to Jerusalem, he stopped to make sure he had everyone he needed (Ezra 8:15).
- David is the person who appointed the Nethinims to serve the Levites (Ezra 8:20).
- Ezra proclaimed a fast (Ezra 8:21). The purpose of this fast was to seek the right path for the group, for their children, and for their goods as they traveled. The Jews wanted to find a safe road that would take them to Jerusalem.
- Since Ezra told the king that God protected those who sought Him and was against those who forsook Him, Ezra didn't want to ask the king for soldiers to protect them. After all, he had just told the king that God would protect them! If he asked for soldiers then it would have made God look weak and powerless (Ezra 8:22).
- The hand of God is upon all those who seek Him, for their good (Ezra 8:22).
- The power of God is against all those who forsake Him (Ezra 8:22).
- Ezra didn't just assume that God would protect them. Instead he and his group fasted, prayed, and earnestly sought God's protection (Ezra 8:23).
- Ezra protected the group's treasure by putting it into the

custody of 12 chosen priests (Ezra 8:25). This means the treasure wasn't put into the custody of a single person.

- The 12 priests who were entrusted with the treasures were holy (Ezra 8:28). Ezra made sure that the holy vessels of the temple were being carried by priests who were also holy.
- The treasure was weighed before it was given to the 12 chosen priests (Ezra 8:29). The priests were told that once the group reached Jerusalem, the treasure would be weighed again. This would ensure that all of it had arrived safely.
- God saved the group from enemies along the road (Ezra 8:31).
- The group's treasure was weighed in the temple after the people reached Jerusalem (Ezra 8:33). When Eleazar weighed the treasure, Meremoth was with him – which means Eleazar didn't weigh the treasure alone.
- The Jews who had been taken into captivity and then returned to Judah offered burnt offerings to God (Ezra 8:35).
- The princes told Ezra that some Jews were living like the pagans of the land, intermarrying with them and committing the same abominations as the pagans (Ezra 9:1-2). The priests, Levites, and common people were guilty of this sin.
- The leadership of Israel were leading the way in this sin. They were guilty of it themselves, and their bad example was teaching the rest of the nation to sin (Ezra 9:2).
- Ezra didn't know this was happening until he was told about it (Ezra 9:3). He became greatly upset when he

found out about it.

- When Ezra heard this news he tore his garment and mantle (Ezra 9:3). He also tore hair out of his head and beard.
- Ezra was ashamed to lift up his face to God because he knew the nation was guilty of sin (Ezra 9:6).
- The iniquity of the Jews was very large. Ezra said that it reached up to the heavens (Ezra 9:6).
- The reason God gave the Jews over to their enemies was because of all the sins they had committed against Him (Ezra 9:7).
- The nation in Ezra's time was guilty of terrible sins, just like their forefathers. Nothing had changed (Ezra 9:7).
- Although the Jews were captives, God hadn't forgotten them (Ezra 9:9).
- God had shown great mercy to the Jews by reviving them, saving a remnant of them, and allowing them to build the second temple. The Jews responded to this great mercy by committing terrible sins, which was the very thing that caused the wrath of God to fall upon their ancestors (Ezra 9:10).
- God warned the Israelites before they entered Canaan that the land they were about to enter was an unclean land, which had been made filthy by the people who lived there (Ezra 9:11).
- God warned Israel that they must not intermarry with the pagans who lived in the land or make peace with them (Ezra 9:12).

- God punished the Jews less than their sins deserved. He could have punished them even more but He didn't (Ezra 9:13).
- Ezra was afraid that this sin would cause God to utterly consume the Jews until there was no remnant left (Ezra 9:14).
- Ezra confessed the sin of the Jews, even though he wasn't guilty of committing that sin. He was interceding with God on behalf of the nation (Ezra 10:1).
- When Ezra wept and prayed, a large group of people gathered around him (Ezra 10:1).
- Shechaniah said that the Jews should make a covenant with God to separate themselves from their pagan wives, and from the children that were born from those marriages (Ezra 10:3).
- Ezra made the chief priests, the Levites, and the Jews swear that they would separate from their pagan wives, and from the children that came from those marriages (Ezra 10:5).
- A proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all of the Jews should gather at Jerusalem (Ezra 10:7-8). Any Jew who didn't go to Jerusalem within three days would have all their possessions taken away.
- The Jews gathered on the 20th day of the month and sat in the street of the temple (Ezra 10:9). On that day there was an abundance of rain.
- Ezra told the Jews that they had sinned by intermarrying with pagans (Ezra 10:10).
- Ezra commanded the Jews to confess their sin to God and

separate themselves from the pagans who lived in the land (Ezra 10:11).

- The congregation agreed to do what Ezra said. However, they pointed out that there were many people who committed this sin, and the time of year was a time of much rain (Ezra 10:13-14). It would take more than a few days to handle the matter. The congregation asked the rulers to set an appointed time, so that those who married pagan wives could meet with elders and judges to get divorces.
- The congregation wanted the elders of every city to be involved in this. That way the people of those cities could go to their local elders and judges and get divorces (Ezra 10:14).
- It took two months to process all of the divorces (Ezra 10:17).
- Some of the sons of the priests had married pagan women (Ezra 10:18).
- Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah offered a ram for the sin they had committed (which was marrying pagan wives). They had to pay for their sin through a sacrifice (Ezra 10:19).
- Out of the entire Jewish population that was in Judah and Jerusalem at the time, only 113 men from 17 families had married pagan women (Ezra 10:44). Even though only 113 men out of the entire nation were guilty of this sin, Ezra was greatly distressed over the nation's guilt, and the wrath of God was upon the Jews.