

A Renewed Remnant

Lesson 4

The Rebuilding Work Is Stopped (Ezra 4)

Introduction

When God's people involve themselves in His work, they will be opposed because Satan has his servants who actively attempt to thwart God's purposes (Jn. 15:18-19; 1 Jn. 3:13; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12). The key is to not only expect it, but also be determined to rise above it. The "renewed remnant" faced this very challenge in their efforts to rebuild Jerusalem. Their failures provide excellent lessons for our work today.

NOTE: Ezra 4 has been a much debated & discussed chapter. Unless great care is taken, the reader can become easily confused.

The approach we will take for our studies is the following. While admitting it is one that ignores chronology, we believe it best represents the text.

vv. 1-5 *Opposition to rebuilding the temple*

vv. 6-23 *A "summary" of opposition to the remnant's rebuilding efforts.*

- It is "parenthetical" in describing this opposition...not just in Cyrus' reign, but also during the reigns of kings who followed him (Ahasuerus & Artaxerxes I)

- More was opposed than just rebuilding the temple...the efforts to rebuild the city, its walls, etc. were also opposed (v. 12)

v. 24 *Resuming the details of the opposition to rebuilding the temple during the reign of Cyrus, even until the reign of Darius I*

- 1) Who is mentioned in v. 1? Considering **2 Kings 17:24-41** in your answer, what do you make of their "claim?"

- 2) What was their request? (v. 2)

- 3) For what reasons did Zerubbabel & Jeshua refuse them? (v. 3)

- 4) What was the enemies' next "tactic?" (vv. 4-5a) How long did this continue? (v. 5b)

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- 5) This opposition was continued into whose reigns? **(vv. 6-7)** [*Refer to the table of Persian kings on pg. 3*] What did the remnant's enemies do to stop the rebuilding efforts?

- 6) Thought question: consider the following passages that illustrate just how far those who oppose God and His people will go to stop His work: **Eph. 2:2b; Acts 17:5-13; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:13-15.**

- 7) Specifically mentioning the letter to Artaxerxes I, what was the accusation against the remnant Jews? **(vv. 7-16)** Do you think anything stated in the letter was true?

- 8) How did this letter attempt to characterize the remnant Jews? **(vv. 13, 16)** How did its writers attempt to bolster their own credibility? **(v. 14)**

- 9) How did Artaxerxes I reply? **(vv. 17-22)** What resulted? **(v. 23)** For how long? **(v. 24)**

- 10) Could the remnant have presented any "evidence" to counter these accusations?

- 11) How would you characterize the remnant Jews in their response to all this? Does the fact that God sent 2 prophets to rebuke & encourage them give any indication?