

EZRA 4

(v1) The Adversaries

- (v2-3) _____: “Let us join you” in building the Temple
(v4) _____ the people
(v5) _____ counselors to _____ their purpose

☒  Cyrus II (550-530 BC)

☒  Darius I (522-486 BC)

☒  Ahasuerus (aka Xerxes I, 486–465 BC)

- (v6) Written accusation (at the beginning of his reign)

☒  Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-425 BC)

- (v7) 1st Letter from Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabel (Isaiah 7:5-6)
(v8) 2nd Letter from Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the “rest of their companions”

(v12) They are _____ the rebellious and evil _____
(v12) They are _____ its _____
(v12) They are _____ the foundations
(v13) They will not pay _____, tribute, or custom
(v13) The king’s treasury will be _____
(v15) _____ the book of the records
(v15) They will be _____ to kings and provinces
(v15) They will _____ sedition
(v16) King will _____ dominion beyond the River

(v17-22) Response from Artaxerxes

(v19-20) The book of the records is found and read
(v21-22) Command them to _____ until I say so

(v23) Officials used _____ to make Israel stop

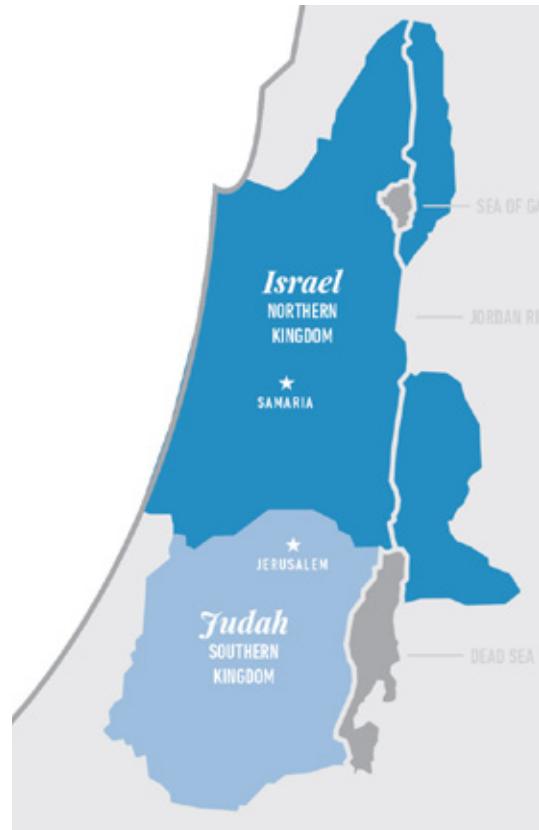
☒  (v24) Work ceased until _____ year of the reign of Darius

Chapter 4 focus:

Examine the people:

Ezra 3:3: In spite of their _____ of the people of the Land,
the leaders built the altar and reinstated corporate worship
(Exodus parallel: Numbers 13-14)

- When leaders become afraid and communicate their fear, how does that affect the greater congregation?
- Who are Israel's adversaries (enemies) in v1-5?
 - » Remnant of the Kingdom of Israel left behind by the Assyrians and kept a corrupt version of Hebrew worship
 - » Foreigners who Esarhaddon (Osnapper) moved into Samaria (v 2, 10)
 - » Persian officials and governors
- Why wouldn't the the people of the land want Judah to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple?
- Why wouldn't the Persian officials want Israel to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple?
- What are the enemies' tactics?
 - » _____
 - » _____
 - » _____



“Let us join you”

“You shall not plow with an ox [clean animal] and a donkey [unclean animal] together.” Deut. 22:10,

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...” 2 Cor. 6:14-15

Exodus parallel: Numbers 25, joining with the Moabite women

- What decision do Israel's leaders make (v3)?
- The task of building up the spiritual House of God falls to us in this age. Do we need to be careful about what associations or partnerships we make with this world? Why?
- What are similar arguments we get today that have a message of "join us (or let us join you)"?

Discouragement

- How do these adversaries discourage the returnees? What forms does discouragement take?

» _____

» _____

» _____

» _____

» _____

- Who might be adversaries in our lives who try to keep us from rebuilding our relationship with God?
- What kind of fear or discouragement might we face in regards to them?

Hiring Counselors

- How can counselors frustrate people?
- How do we battle fear, discouragement, and their worldly, antagonistic counsel

The Kings

- What kings are mentioned?

» _____

» Cambyses (not mentioned in Ezra, reigns for 7 years)

» _____

» _____ (Xerxes I)

» _____ Longimanus

» Darius II

Examine the document/tasks:

- » Letter to Ahasuerus (v6)
- » 1st letter to Artaxerxes from Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and “the rest” (v7)
- » 2nd letter to Artaxerxes from Rehum and Shimshai (v8-16)
- » Artaxerxes’ reply to Rehum and Shimshai (v17-22)

Letter to Ahasuerus

- Where do we read about Ahasuerus in the Bible?
- Why would Ezra mention him in this chapter on adversaries? What kind of enemy attack happened during Ahasuerus’ reign?

First Letter to Artaxerxes

Sent by three Persian officials in Samaria:

- » Bishlam (“son of peace”),
- » Mithredath (“given by Mithra”), and
- » Tabel (“God is good” or “pleasing to God”)

- Why mention that these letters are written in Aramaic?

There are circumstances and conditions, like _____ barriers, that become deterrent to building projects, in addition to the human ones.

Second Letter to Artaxerxes

Enemy tactic: _____

- According to Rehum's letter to Artaxerxes, what are the Jews doing (just the facts)?

» _____
» _____
» _____

- Rehum warns the king what will happen if he allows the city to be built. What are the consequences?

» They will not pay _____
» The king's treasury will _____
» They will be _____ to kings and provinces
» They will incite sedition, which is why the city was destroyed in the first place
» The _____ will end up having no dominion over the territory

- To find a time in Israel's history that fits Rehum's description here, you have to go all the way back to _____ (1 Kings 4:21)

- Is Rehum's report blowing the situation completely out of proportion, or is there some truth to it?

- What is Artaxerxes response?

- Note how the letters, rather than the physical leaders, become the authority that drives (or hinders) the work on the House of God. Why is that important?

Examine the timeline:

- Is chapter 4 chronological?
- There is king called Darius II who comes after Artaxerxes historically. Is this the Darius in v24? (Read Ezra 6:14)
- If all the work was accomplished in the reign of Artaxerxes, why then does the verse say "Thus, the work ceased until the reign of Darius" as if the work continued on? There seems to be an inconsistency here. How do we answer critics of this passage?

Literary Structure

1. **Inclusio:** a repeated phrase that marks the beginning and end of a selection of verses and indicates these verses contain a specific message or picture.

The inclusio begins in verse _____ and ends in verse _____ with the repeated phrase "the reign of Darius king of Persia."

The picture in this inclusio is the full extent of the _____ to the rebuilding the House of God by Israel's adversaries.

- ## **2. Chiastic structure** (alternative to a chronological structure)

A **chiasm** is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order. The result is a “mirror” effect as the ideas are “reflected” back in a passage. Each idea is connected to its “reflection” by a repeated word, often in a related form. The ABBA structure.

Example:
Matthew 23:12

- A - And whoever exalts himself
- B - will be humble
- B - he who humbles himself
- A - will be exalted.

In a timeline, a chiastic structure helps present an _____.

The purpose of switching from a chronological to chiastic order is to give us an overview of events that accomplish the objective: Rebuilding the _____, which includes the _____.

The chiastic structure begins in Ezra 4 and extends into Ezra 6. It ends in Ezra 6:14 with a summary statement.

Only the Temple is finished by the end of the book of Ezra. Nehemiah builds the city. This overview points us to the fact that this task is going to continue beyond the book of Ezra into the book of Nehemiah. It indicates that the two books are connected.

