

Rebuilding Broken Places
Studies in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai
Oppositions Come with God's "Cause"
Ezra 4:1-24

INTRODUCTION: Chuck Swindoll has a book titled, *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back*. That title fits Ezra 4. God had stirred up the heart of the pagan King Cyrus to issue a decree for the Jews to return to their land and rebuild His temple. Hurrah, one step forward! Fifty thousand Jews responded by giving up their lives in Babylon and making the long, dangerous trek back to the land. Two steps forward! They rebuilt the altar, gathered in Jerusalem, celebrated the Feast of Booths, and laid the foundation for the new temple. Three steps forward!

Then the enemy hit and the work on the temple stopped. One step back. The work ceased for 16 long years. Two steps back. They were still in the land (one step ahead), but there was no center for worship in Jerusalem. The people, intimidated by their enemies, settled into a routine of life that got along without temple worship.

- I. *Evil Oppositions Come When One Is On Track To do God's Will VI-7*
 - A. The enemies of the exiles were the Samaritans. The land of Israel and Judah was not uninhabited at the time of the return from exile. The descendants of those people who had not been taken to Babylonia as well as those who had been brought into that area by the Assyrians. (II Kings 17:1-6)
 - B. There had been previous clashes with this enemy earlier, (Ezra 3:3) and their offer to help to rebuild the temple was not sincere.
 - C. Their enemy discouraged them to rebuild the temple. And on top of that they hired "counselors" to frustrate them. These were "bribed" officials at the Persian court. *The enemy of our soul will legislate laws to hinder God's work.* But we must understand we have God on our side and he has our back. (Isaiah 40:10), (Isaiah 40:10-11)
- II. *Letters, Lies and the Law V8-21*
 - A. The opposition succeeded in bringing the work on the temple to a 16-year standstill. Lies were told and a law was passed. (V21) *Because it is law does not make it right. There are times we are to rebel against man made laws to serve God almighty.* (Acts 5:27-32), (Galatians 1:10)

- B. Man will tell lies, and pass laws to try to stop God's agenda. If what we are doing will cause them to lose money here comes the opposition and laws. *If by us starting a school impedes on others agenda Satan will devise a plan of attack.*
- C. We must understand opposition can ignite and unite us as bond-servants of Christ to be infectious with the gospel of Christ. To advance His cause for His kingdom. *May we not allow opposition to paralyze us to the point of not being effective for Christ.*

III. God's Will, Will Be DONE V22-24

- A. Thus the work of the temple of God which is at Jerusalem ceased: Through the kinds of tactics of the Samaritans mentioned in the broad survey of Ezra 4:4-23, these adversaries succeeded in stopping the building work for some 16 years.
- B. The lies that were told caused King Artaxerxes to respond in fear and pass a law against the Jews. *Satan uses fear to paralyze and hinder God's people. To prevent them from understanding their full potential in Christ, to "know who they are, whose they are, and what they have been called to do"*
- C. The propaganda of the enemy is real, but God's is truly more powerful than the enemy's propaganda. The temple was finished by Haggai and Zechariah's time of prophecy.(6:15-27)
- D. *Ezra's name means help in the Hebrew, Haggai means festival of Yahweh and Zechariah means God remembers. God was saying to the Jews, he is their help leading to worship, because God remembers them. (Genesis 8:1)*

Lamentations 3:22-23

The Lord's acts of mercy indeed do not end, For His compassions do not fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

G.T.G

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