



EZRA

▶▶ THE RETURN

EZRA | THE RETURN

Ezra 5: “Persevering through the Pain”

What threatens to stop the work of God? → Ezra 4:1-24

1-3→**Compromise threatens the work of God.**→Compromise put the Israelites in exile!

- The Israelites understood that these people wanted to help...but according to the end THEY had in mind.
- God calls us to be a witness to the world & not a follower of it.→2 Cor. 6: “Don’t team up with unbelievers...”
- People who not follow Jesus are NOT our enemies.→That doesn’t mean they can’t further the work of our enemy...
- Show me your friends and ill show you your future...bc the slow influence of different values changes our destination.
- COMPROMISE in VALUES & DEFINITIONS: Identity, Purpose, Sex, Money & Resources, Careers, Time & Leisure.
 - Clear teaching of Scripture
 - God’s purpose for our lives
 - Conviction of the HS
- A Christ following community keeps Christ as the focus!→Samaritan well (Jn. 4).→Who is influencing who?
- Where has a relationship threatened the work of God through a slow erosion of Christian definitions & values?

4-5→**Fear, discouragement, & bullies threaten the work of God.**→Intimidation tactics!

- Wherever there is ground to lose, there will always be a fight.: We must be doing something right!
- DeSales: They were a well oiled machine. Organized. Trained well. Worked together, not alone. Coach Kim “Cox: 34 years, 670-134 / .833 winning % / 19 state champs / Playoffs = 30 years in a row
- Be prepared for a fight. Work together. Don’t give up!→Organize. Train. Be ready for the long haul.
- Where am I afraid, discouraged, or facing a bully?→What work is stopped or is being threatened?

6-24→**The assault of accusations threaten the work of God.**→Timeline:Author shows history of conflict

- They want to stop the work!! They are intentionally trying to stop the work & they have been for a long time!!
 - they won’t pay (tribute, custom, or toll) - 13
 - they dishonor the king - 14
 - they have history of rebellion - 15
 - they will take over - 16
 - Christians were accused of being incestuous polytheist cannibals in the early Roman rule.
- Christians will always have accusations against us because our allegiance is to a different Kingdom.
 - This doesn’t mean we don’t pay our taxes.
 - This doesn’t mean we don’t honor our government.
 - This doesn’t mean we don’t serve our nation willingly.
 - ...& none of this stops us from evangelizing EN MASS.→Biologically. Spiritually.
 - We can do all those things...but when we are asked to go against what God...we must choose God.
- We must choose to live for God even when it becomes illegal.
- Where are Christians accused today?→We hate certain groups of people. We discriminate. We don’t believe in science. →The world will always misunderstand us...bc our allegiance is not to this world.
- Where have i been assaulted by accusations that threaten the work of God in my life?→James 1

Perseverance builds strength! → PRAYER:Father, help...!

TALK ABOUT IT - Questions to GROW through with family, friends, & myself.

1. What is the greatest threat to Christianity, as I see it, in the world today?
2. Where has a relationship threatened the work of God through a slow erosion of Christian definitions & values?
3. Where am I afraid, discouraged, or facing a bully? What work is stopped or being threatened?
4. Where have I been unfairly assaulted by accusations because of misunderstanding of my faith?
5. **PRAYER:** "Father, build strength in us as we persevere through the trails & temptations of this life."

Chronology of Ezra

Event	Year	Reference
Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon	539 B.C.	Dan. 5:30-31
First year of King Cyrus; issues proclamation freeing Jewish exiles to return	538- 537	Ezra 1:1-4
Jewish exiles, led by Sheshbazzar, return from Babylon to Jerusalem	537?	Ezra 1:11
Altar rebuilt	537	Ezra 3:1-2
Temple rebuilding begins	536	Ezra 3:8
Adversaries oppose the rebuilding	536- 530	Ezra 4:1-5
Temple rebuilding ceases	530- 520	Ezra 4:24
Temple rebuilding resumes (2nd year of Darius)	520	Ezra 5:2 ; compare Hag. 1:14
Temple construction completed (6th year of Darius)	516	Ezra 6:15
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives in 7th year of Artaxerxes)	458	Ezra 7:6-9
Men of Judah and Benjamin assemble at Jerusalem	458	Ezra 10:9
Officials conduct three-month investigation	458- 457	Ezra 10:16-17

Chronology of Nehemiah

Event	Month/Day	Year	Reference
Hanani brings Nehemiah a report from Jerusalem (20th year of Artaxerxes I)		445- 444 B.C.	1:1
Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes	1	445	2:1
Nehemiah arrives to inspect Jerusalem walls		445	2:11
Wall is finished	6/25	445	6:15
People of Israel gather	7	445	7:73-8:1
People of Israel celebrate Feast of Booths	7/15-22	445	8:14
People of Israel fast and confess sins	7/24	445	9:1
Nehemiah returns to Susa (32nd year of Artaxerxes I)		433	5:14 ; 13:6

LINKS / RESOURCES:

Bible Project Ezra/Nehemiah Video: <https://youtu.be/MkETkRv9tG8>

Chronology of Ezra: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-15-03/>

Chronology of Nehemiah: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-16-01/>

SCRIPTURES: New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Ezra 4:1-24

Enemies Oppose the Rebuilding

4 The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were rebuilding a Temple to the Lord, the God of Israel. 2 So they approached Zerubbabel and the other leaders and said, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God just as you do. We have sacrificed to him ever since King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here."

3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other leaders of Israel replied, "You may have no part in this work. We alone will build the Temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, just as King Cyrus of Persia commanded us."

4 Then the local residents tried to discourage and frighten the people of Judah to keep them from their work. 5 They bribed agents to work against them and to frustrate their plans. This went on during the entire reign of King Cyrus of Persia and lasted until King Darius of Persia took the throne.

Later Opposition under Xerxes and Artaxerxes

6 Years later when Xerxes began his reign, the enemies of Judah wrote a letter of accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 Even later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, the enemies of Judah, led by Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel, sent a letter to Artaxerxes in the Aramaic language, and it was translated for the king.

8 Rehum the governor and Shimshai the court secretary wrote the letter, telling King Artaxerxes about the situation in Jerusalem. 9 They greeted the king for all their colleagues—the judges and local leaders, the people of Tarpel, the Persians, the Babylonians, and the people of Erech and Susa (that is, Elam). 10 They also sent greetings from the rest of the people whom the great and noble Ashurbanipal had deported and relocated in Samaria and throughout the neighboring lands of the province west of the Euphrates River. 11 This is a copy of their letter:

"To King Artaxerxes, from your loyal subjects in the province west of the Euphrates River.

12 "The king should know that the Jews who came here to Jerusalem from Babylon are rebuilding this rebellious and evil city. They have already laid the foundation and will soon finish its walls. 13 And the king should know that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, it will be much to your disadvantage, for the Jews will then refuse to pay their tribute, customs, and tolls to you.

14 "Since we are your loyal subjects and do not want to see the king dishonored in this way, we have sent the king this information. 15 We suggest that a search be made in your ancestors' records, where you will discover what a rebellious city this has been in the past. In fact, it was destroyed because of its long and troublesome history of revolt against the kings and countries who controlled it. 16 We declare to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the province west of the Euphrates River will be lost to you."

17 Then King Artaxerxes sent this reply:

"To Rehum the governor, Shimshai the court secretary, and their colleagues living in Samaria and throughout the province west of the Euphrates River. Greetings.

18 "The letter you sent has been translated and read to me. 19 I ordered a search of the records and have found that Jerusalem has indeed been a hotbed of insurrection against many kings. In fact, rebellion and revolt are normal there! 20 Powerful kings have ruled over Jerusalem and the entire province west of the Euphrates River, receiving tribute, customs, and tolls. 21 Therefore, issue orders to have these men stop their work. That city must not be rebuilt except at my express command. 22 Be diligent, and don't neglect this matter, for we must not permit the situation to harm the king's interests."

23 When this letter from King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum, Shimshai, and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem. Then, with a show of strength, they forced the Jews to stop building.

The Rebuilding Resumes

24 So the work on the Temple of God in Jerusalem had stopped, and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

2 Corinthians 6

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?

James 1

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.