

NEVER SELL OUT

Lesson 3

⁴ Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. ⁵ They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia. ~ Ezra 4:4-5 NIV

Big Idea

Anytime you are doing something to glorify God, expect opposition. The people of the land opposed the rebuilding efforts of the Jews in Jerusalem. Intimidation and bribery were used to hinder the work of the Jews.

Historical Background

- This happened between 586 to 538 BCE.
- The Persian Empire, under King Cyrus, conquered Babylon and allowed the rebuilding of the temple.
- Ezra was a priest and scribe who played a crucial role in the restoration process.
- The Jewish people were returning and sought to re-establish their identity and style of worship.
- (The Persian officials were bribed to frustrate the plans of the returnees.)

Important Reflection

Sometimes it is the people that you least expect who are the ones that betray you.

Quotations

"A man of a right spirit is not a man of narrow and private views, but is greatly interested and concerned for the good of the community to which he belongs, and particularly of the city or village in which he resides, and for the true welfare of the society of which he is a member."

— **Jonathan Edwards**

"The church is not a democracy in which we have chosen God, but a theocracy in which He has chosen us. The church is the society in the world that never loses any members, even by death. The church upon its knees would bring heaven upon the earth."

— **E.M. Bounds**

Cultural Distinctions and Customs

- A. The significance of a temple (house of worship).
- B. To make a plan the crisis is returning.
 - Consider the political climate and the social dynamics of the times
 - Tension existed regarding whom they worshiped (the Jews and the local people)
 - Understand the narrative of God's additional plans (Nehemiah and Haggai)

Personal Application

- A. Discover personal challenges of faith.
- B. Set a plan for how to overcome opposition.

Three things the enemy plans:

- Discouragement
 - Dissuaded
 - Division
- C. Face difficulties with trust and encouragement.

"A complete misrepresentation of the undertaking and the undertakers to higher leadership—the king of Persia."

Scripture Reflections

Their children went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you gave the Canaanites into their hands, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased. ~ **Nehemiah 9:24 NIV**

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ~ **Psalm 46:1 NIV**

Closing Encouragement

- Prayer and complete trust in God.
- Developing and building a supportive community.
- Delays in the manifestation of God's blessings and miracles, or seasons of stagnation, can result in attacks, oppression, and opposition from the enemy.

Be encouraged to trust God's plan despite difficulties!