

Enemies Rising...

Ezra four can be challenging to read and understand. There are major time changes within this one chapter. We read of King Cyrus (4:3), King Darius (4:5), King Xerxes (4:6), and King Artaxerxes (4:7). This time frame goes from the present to thirty years in the future.

Getting the Persian Kings in Order

Cyrus: 539-530 B.C.– 4:3
 Darius: 522-486 B.C. – 4:5
 Xerxes: 486-465 B.C.– 4:6
 Artaxerxes: 465-424 B.C.– 4:7

Roper says, "This was written to help readers understand the very real threat the people of the land posed to God's people. These threats last nearly 90 years."

NOTICE:

1. The enemy is referred to as "The people of the land" (4:4).
 - When the Assyrians moved Israel out, they moved others in
 - While the claim, "we seek your God and sacrifice to Him" (4:2) may have been true, they were not monotheistic. (Ex 20:3; Mt 4:10).
2. The work on the temple stopped for about 15 years (4:5). This is when Haggai rebukes them for not finishing the job.
3. The accusatory letter to King Artaxerxes talks of rebuilding the walls (4:12), not the temple. This came about in Nehemiah's time.
4. The letter was written in Aramaic (4:7) which was considered official language. It was translated into Persian (4:7)
5. The King found accounts of revolts against kings in the past (4:19)
 - There were many battles through the period of Kings and Chronicles. David, especially, was a powerful king that subdued the area.
6. The chapter ends by returning to present time (4:24)

The Methods of the Enemy

- C _____: we are like you (2)
- D _____ (4)
- F _____ (4)
- F _____ (5)
- A _____ (7)

Ezra 4

Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, ² they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here." ³ But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."

⁴ Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, ⁵ and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Lessons

1. We need to be aware of the tactics of Satan (2 Cor 2:11)
2. Discouragement is powerful and we need to recognize it and defeat it
3. We must not allow our enemies from stopping what God wants us to do
4. We must recognize those who "have nothing in common with us" (3).

Four Accusations in the Letter to the King:

- History shows that these people are rebellious (15)
- You will have a loss in revenue (13)
- They will dishonor the king (14)
- They will take over the area (16)

