

ADVERSARIES OF ISRAEL'S WORK
(Ezra 4:1-24)

- I. Initial Offer of COOPERATION (Ezra 4:1-3)
 - A. RECEIVING the offer of assistance (4:1-2)
 - 1. Offered by “the ENEMIES of Judah and Benjamin”
 - 2. Probably the SAMARITANS, practicing a FALSE worship
 - 3. A FORMAL presentation to the Jewish LEADERSHIP
 - 4. Claimed FALSELY to “seek YOUR GOD”
 - B. REJECTING the offer of assistance (4:3)
 - 1. A UNANIMOUS decision of the LEADERSHIP
 - 2. Explained their SUFFICIENCY to do the building
 - 3. Stated their LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY to do the building
 - 4. Maintained the SANCTITY of the work
- II. Resultant Efforts at OPPOSITION (Ezra 4:4-24)
 - A. Account of HINDRANCES to the work from the reign of Cyrus to Darius [534 – 522 BC] (4:4-5)
 - 1. In general, they DISCOURAGED and FRIGHTENED the workers
 - 2. Specifically, they “HIRED COUNSELORS against them”
 - B. Parenthetical description of CONTINUING OPPOSITION to the work during reigns of Ahasuerus [486 – 465 BC] and Artaxerxes [465 -425 BC] (4:6-23)
 - 1. Says they wrote ACCUSATIONS against the Judeans
 - 2. Cites a specific LETTER to Artaxerxes

- a. Written in ARAMAIC
 - b. Introduction implies unanimous support of the entire provincial ADMINISTRATION and PUPULATION
 - c. Identifies the writers as the SAME ENEMIES faced by Zerubbabel
 - d. Slandered Jerusalem as “REBELLIOUS and EVIL”
 - e. Accused them of doing more RESTORATION than the king’s charter AUTHORIZED
 - f. Said this threatened the imperial TREASURY
 - g. Implied this would bring DISHONOR to the king
 - h. Predicted the king would LOSE EVERYTHING beyond the Euphrates
3. Quotes the REPLY from Artaxerxes
- a. Indicates the records SUPPORT their contention
 - b. Charged them to STOP the WORK until the king might say otherwise
 - c. Made them responsible for any DETRIMENT to himself
4. Stopped the work by threatening FORCE
- C. Record of INTERRUPTION of the work until the second year of DARIUS [521 BC] (4:24)

III. Lessons

- A. God’s ENEMIES will be PERSISTENT (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12)
- B. Persistent opposition can cause God’s people to grow WEARY and to QUIT (cf. Gal. 6:9; 2 Thes. 3:13)
- C. COMPROMISE with enemies of the TRUE FAITH must be steadfastly REJECTED