

# Ezra – Chapter Four

## “Expected Opposition”

### Timeline

Esarhaddon (Assyrian King) 681-669  
Osnappar (Assyrian King Ashurbanipal) 669-627  
Cyrus 538-530  
First Wave Returned 538 (Zerubbabel & Jeshua)  
Work on Temple Begins 536  
Work on the Temple Ceases 536 or 535  
Darius 521-486  
Haggai & Zechariah Write Their Prophecies 520  
Work on the Temple Resumes 520  
Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) 486-465  
Artaxerxes I 464-423  
Second Wave Returned 458 (Ezra)  
**Ezra Writes Ezra circa 445-450**  
Third Wave Returned 445 (Nehemiah)

### Review

Chapter 3 – their hearts were right with God: altar ~ Day of Atonement ~ Feast of Tabernacles  
They completed the foundation of the Temple and worshipped God.  
Everything looked great – like it was going according to plan.  
What should they have expected next?: Daniel 9:25 – “. . . troublesome times”

### The Deception by the Opposition 1-3

#### 1

Adversaries (“satan”) of Judah and Benjamin

#### 2

People of many nations were resettled in Samaria after the northern tribes (Israel) were deported in 722. This resettlement in Samaria took place approximately 150 years earlier during the reign of Esarhaddon. This is how the mixed race of Samaritans originated.

They worshipped multiple gods – not just the one true living God of Israel 2 Kings 17:24-29.

#### 3

Zerubbabel and the other leaders had discernment and boldness to stand for and speak the truth.

### The Discouragement by the Opposition 4-5a, 24

#### 4-5a

They used threats and intimidation and interfered directly with the Temple building project. They went to great lengths to discredit the Jews and spread “misinformation” against them.

### The Determination of the Opposition 5b-23

#### 5b

“All the days of Cyrus” – 15 more years

#### 6

Fast forward approximately 50 years: They wrote a letter to Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) when he came to power. By this time the Temple had been rebuilt. They tried to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls.

#### 7

Fast forward another 20 years: Artaxerxes I murdered his father and took reign over Persia. Some leaders in the region wrote him a letter against the Jews (written in Aramaic – 4:86:18 & 7:12-26).

## 8-16

Two other leaders in the region wrote a second letter against the Jews to Artaxerxes I.

## 17-22

King Artaxerxes I responded to this second letter.

## 23

The opponents of the Jews used force to stop the rebuilding of the city and its walls.

## Doctrinal Conclusions

### 1. We should expect opposition to God's work and the cause of Christ and to us as His followers in this present world.

**Acts 14:22** – Paul: "...We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

**John 15:18-19** – Jesus: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

**John 16:33** – Jesus: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

### 2. Satan is our real adversary.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

**1 Peter 5:8-10** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (9) Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (10) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.

### 3. We must stand for the exclusivity of truth and the Gospel in the midst of an ecumenical and pluralistic religious environment.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-16a** Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? (15) And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? (16) And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.

### 4. God often seems to be in no hurry to accomplish His purposes.

**2 Peter 3:8** But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. (9) "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So *are* My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."