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The Adversaries of God's People

Ezra 4-6

Key Dates in the Period of the Return and Restoration*

- 538/37 B.C.** first return of the Jews under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-2)
- 537/36 B.C.** the altar built and the foundation laid (Ezra 3)
- 536-520 B.C.** the work on the temple ceases (Ezra 4)
- 520 B.C.** the preaching of Haggai (1-2) and Zechariah (1-6)
- 520 B.C.** the temple construction resumes (Ezra 5)
- 518 B.C.** the preaching of Zechariah (Zechariah 7-14)
- 516/15 B.C.** the temple is completed (Ezra 6)
- 486 B.C.** the Jews opposed in the beginning of Xerxes (Ezra 4:6)
- 483 B.C.** Xerxes holds a feast (Esther 1)
- 479 B.C.** Esther is made queen (Esther 2)
- 474/73 B.C.** Haman plans to kill the Jews (Esther 3-10)
- 464-423 B.C.** the Jews opposed in Artaxerxes' reign (Ezra 7:7ff)
- 458/57 B.C.** the second return of the Jews under Ezra (Ezra 7-10)
- 445-433 B.C.** Nehemiah returns & rebuilds the walls (Neh. 1-12)
- 433-432 B.C.** Nehemiah's recall and return (Nehemiah 13)
- 432-425 B.C.** the preaching of Malachi (1-4)

* all dates are approximate

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Ezra 4 Overview: Temple Work Opposed

- The presence of opposition (4:1-5)
- The types of opposition (4:6-23)
- The result of opposition (4:24)

Ezra 5 Overview: Temple Work Resumed

- Resumed by the prophets of God (5:1-2)
- Resumed by the providence of God (5:3-5)
- Resumed by the people of God (5:6-17)

Ezra 6 Overview: Temple Work Completed

- Completed with permission and provisions (6:1-12)
- Completed with preaching and prosperity (6:13-15)
- Completed with prescription and purity (6:16-22)





1. Adversaries will be present in our life

The adversaries of the Jews

- In Zerubbabel's day (Ezra 4:1)
- In Esther's day (Esther 7:4, 7)
- In Ezra's day (Ezra 10:15)
- In Nehemiah's day (Neh. 4:11)

Our adversaries today

- Unbelievers (Mt. 5:25; Lk. 12:58; 13:17; 18:3; 21:15; 1 Cor. 16:9; Heb. 10:27)
- The devil (1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:8)

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2. Adversaries can be effective in stopping you

The effect on the Jews

- Work on the temple ceased for 16 years, 536 – 520 B.C. (Ezra 4:24)
- The Jews began to focus on their personal lives instead of rebuilding the temple (see Haggai)

The effect on us today

- Attendance ceases
- Growth and work cease
- Standing for truth ceases
- Personal work ceases
- Benevolence ceases
- Local churches cease

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3. Adversaries can come in different forms

The adversaries of the Jews

- Association (Ezra 4:1-3)
- Intimidation (Ezra 4:4-5)
- Legislation (Ezra 4:6-24)

Our adversaries today

- Materialism
- Secularism
- Hedonism
- Denominationalism
- Post-modernism

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4. Adversaries can be resisted with the right attitude

The attitude of the Jews

- The preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1-2) caused the temple to be finished in four years
- Haggai's four sermons: priority, perspective, purity, and promises

Our attitude today

- No fear (Phil. 1:28)