

EZRA: STARTING OVER WELL AFTER GROUP FAILURE
Part VI: Overcoming Human Opposition To Doing God's Will
(Ezra 4:1-6:22)

I. Introduction

- A. Besides the **spiritual** opposition the believer faces, **human opposition** can be used of the Devil in the form of evil people to dissuade the believer from completing the will of God.
- B. Ezra 4:1-6:22 describes various forms of such human opposition the returned exiles faced when they attempted to complete the temple, and how such formidable kinds of opposition are overcome.

II. Overcoming Human Opposition To Doing God's Will, Ezra 4:1-6:22.

- A. The returned Hebrew exiles faced **formidable human opposition** to finishing the temple reconstruction:
 - 1. The Hebrews were opposed in various ways in their temple reconstruction work by the descendants of mixed Hebrew and Gentile marriages who lived in Samaria as the Samaritans, Ezra 4:1-5:
 - a. The descendants of mixed Hebrew and Gentile marriages who settled in Samaria stood opposed to the return of the pure Hebrew exiles, and tried to block their temple reconstruction work, Ezra 4:1-2.
 - b. First, they asked to be included in the temple reconstruction as though they were part of the covenant community, an effort to infiltrate and thus try to stifle the work from within, Ezra 4:1-2, with Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, p. 660. Zerubbabel and Jeshua flatly refused their help, claiming the Samaritans had no fellowship with them, and that the Hebrews were acting in accord with the legal decree from emperor Cyrus to do what they did, Ezra 4:3.
 - c. Second, having been kept out of the effort, the Samaritans then tried to intimidate the Hebrews to stop their reconstruction effort by sending public relations experts to influence the Persian king to stop the reconstruction work all during the reign of Cyrus until the reign of Darius, Ezra 4:4-5.
 - 2. Finally, when Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) came to the throne in 486 B. C., these Samaritans succeeded in their effort through sending a slanderous report of the Hebrews to the king. They focused on the rebelliousness of their Hebrew forefathers to the Assyrian and Babylonian predecessors of the Persians, urging the king to force the Hebrews to stop their temple reconstruction work, Ezra 4:6-16.
 - 3. The king studied his historical records and verified the rebelliousness of the Hebrew forefathers against his own predecessors, and so passed an edict **temporarily** to stop the temple reconstruction, Ezra 4:17-21, 22. This in part caused the Hebrews to stop work on the temple, Ezra 4:23-24.
- B. However, the Lord raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (whose messages we have in Scripture) to encourage them to return to the work, Ezra 5:1. [We learned in the last lesson that worldliness was in part a motivating factor behind the choice to stop the temple work. Haggai and Zechariah critiqued the matter, and encouraged the people to continue to work in hope that God would make their effort worthwhile.]
- C. Thus, the Hebrews under the lead of Zerubbabel and Jeshua began to work again on the temple, Ezra 5:2.
- D. However, the regional Persian governor, Tatnai with his aide confronted the Hebrews since they were acting in opposition to the edict of Ahasuerus, Ezra 5:3 with Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Ezra 5:3-4.
- E. Yet, the **Lord** was at work in Judah's elders so they would **not** be **intimidated** by even the regional governor, so they kept building until the matter gained the attention of Darius, Persia's new king, 5:5b.
- F. Well, the Persian governor, Tatnai, wrote to the new king, Darius to report how the Jews had refused to cease their temple reconstruction by claiming the great Persian king, Cyrus had sanctioned their effort, Ezra 5:5c-16. In his letter, Tatnai asked that Darius search to see if such a record by Cyrus existed so he could expose the Hebrews to be misleading so as to stop their temple reconstruction effort, Ezra 5:17.
- G. When Darius searched and found Cyrus' edict verifying the temple reconstruction, he ordered Tatnai to stop bothering the Jews, and to support out of Tatnai's own revenues the temple work or be executed, Ezra 6:1-12. Tatnai quickly obeyed, so the exiles finished, and dedicated the temple, Ezra 6:13-15, 16-22.

Lesson: *When countered by human enemies, God sent His prophets to charge the people to heed God in spite of these enemies and build the temple. When the people obeyed God, He gave them courage to keep working and forced their enemies even to have to support the work out of their own tax revenues!*

Application: *When facing human opposition to heeding God, (1) if we HEED God ANYWAY, (2) GOD (a) EMBOLDENS us to CONTINUE in His will and (b) CHECKS those who oppose our heeding Him!*