

Week of February 3, 2019
Rebuild: Resist
Ezra 4:1-5, 24

Getting Started:

1) What are some unfinished projects around your house?

The Big Idea:

At the end of chapter three we see crowds cheering and celebrating at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new temple. Everything suggests that it will be built in no time. However as chapter 4 unfolds we soon discover that the project comes to a stop before it really begins. It sits untouched and unfinished for nearly 15 years because of opposition by the people of the land.

Digging Deeper:

Read Ezra 4:1-5, 24 & 5:1-2¹

2) Verses 1 and 2 tell us that this enemy's first attempt to undermine this work involved a request to come and help them build.

a) What benefits might someone have cited for letting them join the effort?

b) If the request was granted, how do you think they would have sought to undermine the project?

c) The most dangerous attacks against our faith are subtle. Do you agree? Give some examples of subtle attacks.

3) Instead of force these enemies try to trick the Jews to freely give them permission with the ultimate goal of taking their freedom. When tempted to sin, one of the powerful lies we tend to believe is that we will have as much control after we sin as we did before.

a) What do you see wrong with this?

b) Can you give some examples?

¹ Here's a brief explanation of vss. 6-23: In chapters 1-6 Ezra is giving us history. Zerubbabel's ministry took place about 80 years before Ezra's ministry. As Ezra gives us the details of the opposition faced in Zerubbabel's time, in verses 6-23 he is saying, "*Oh that reminds me of some recent examples of opposition.*" And he then records for us a couple examples that happened closer to his day to show that God's people will continue to face resistance. You've heard of flashbacks. Verses 6-23 is "flash-forward." Verse 24 continues the story ended in verse 5.

4) Though the religious beliefs of these enemies are quite different from the Jews, they insist the differences aren't really significant and that they worship the same God. In our culture we face pressures to redefine Christianity to accommodate popular beliefs and practices.

a) Discuss this pressure in the area of sexual norms?

b) What are some other areas that come to mind?

c) What's the response of the leaders, and how is this instructive for us.

5) In verses 4 & 5 their tactics against the Jew change.

a) What's their new approach?

b) Verse 24 tells us this strategy worked and they ceased working on the temple. Why do you think this was effective?

Making It Real:

6) We are the temple of God vulnerable to attacks that would slow down our progress. This past Sunday we looked at three attacks: giving permission, downplaying differences, and losing courage. Which of these have you wrestled with recently? Pray for each other.