

Ezra-Nehemiah Part 3

Major Theme

There will always be opposition to the work of God's people and God's kingdom in this world.

Timeline of Ezra Chapter 4

This table is taken from James M. Hamilton Jr. commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra 4:1-5 The time of Cyrus to Darius	538–530, reign of Cyrus 522–486, reign of Darius
Ezra 4:6-7 The time of Ahasuerus to Artaxerxes	485–464, reign of Ahasuerus (cf. Esth 1:1) 464–423, reign of Artaxerxes
Ezra 4:8-16 Rehum's letter to Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:8-16 Rehum's letter to Artaxerxes
Ezra 4:17-23 The response of Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:23 could be the setting for the news Nehemiah received in 445 BC (cf. Neh 1:1-3)
Ezra 4:24 Return to the time of Darius	520 BC "second year of . . . Darius"

Ezra writes chapter 4 thematically rather than chronologically.

- Shows that each generation will face opposition to God's Work
- Each generation is connected together in serving God

Ezra 4:1-5 - Opposition Begins

- Similar to the story of the first Exodus - there is opposition upon entering the Promised Land
- The people offering to help are liars who do not worship God according to the Law of Moses.
- 2 Kings 17:33-34, 41 (this is the story of how Samaritans came to be).
- The opposition is a test of faithfulness for the people returning from Exile.

Ezra 4:6-16 - The Letters to the Kings

- The main accusation is this: Jerusalem (and the people of Israel) are rebellious against kings and will not stay loyal or pay taxes/tributes if they rebuild the city.
 - This was also a complaint against Jesus and the New Testament/early church
 - "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world." // John 18:36

Ezra 4:17-23 - Work Ceases

- The people of Israel are undergoing what we would call persecution.
- 2021 World Watch List (Open Doors USA)
 - Over 340 million Christians living in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination
 - 4,761 Christians killed for their faith
 - 4,488 churches and other Christian buildings attacked

- 4,277 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned

Ezra 4:24 - Return to Darius timeline/Work Resumes

- Verse 24 returns to the timeline of Ezra 4:1-5 (and the first few chapters of the book).
- Ezra is making the point that no matter the generation, there will be opposition to the work of God in this world.
- “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” // John 16:33