



1

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- The offer to “help”
 - These were people transplanted from other conquered areas by the Assyrians after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. They had no Jewish heritage but according to 2 Kings 17: 24-41 incorporated sacrifices to Yahweh in addition to their pagan gods.
 - The language here indicates that the offer to help was not sincere.

2

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- The offer to “help”
 - The mention of sacrificing to “your God” betrays their lack of understanding since sacrifices could only be made in Jerusalem and by the priests who were of the tribe of Levi and descendants of Aaron. Even the bona fide priest in exile did not continue the sacrifices. Most likely they viewed the God of the Jews as one of many gods and simply the god over that land. The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim in 450 B.C. which was later destroyed by the Maccabean Jew John Hyrcanus about 120 B.C.

3

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- Probably for all of these reasons Zerubbabel rebuffed their request to help.
- Their true nature came out as they then used every means possible to frustrate the rebuilding of the Temple and were successful at keeping the project from completion for the next 20 years.
 - Discouraged and threatened
 - Bribed counselors against them
 - Wrote a letter that has not been preserved to Ahasuerus
 - Wrote a letter to Artaxerxes

4

List of the Kings of Persia from 550 BC to 330 BC	
Persian Kings	Period of Reign (Approx)
Cyrus II "the Great"	550-529 BC
Cambyses II	529-522 BC
Darius I	522-486 BC
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) [Esther]	486-465 BC
Artaxerxes I [Ezra/Nehemiah]	465-425 BC
Xerxes II	425-424 BC
Darius II	423-404 BC
Artaxerxes II	404-359 BC
Artaxerxes III	359-338 BC
Arses	338-336 BC
Darius III	336-330 BC

5

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- Letter to Artaxerxes
 - Falsely indicated that the main part of the work was on the defensive walls of the city
 - Focused on the city of Jerusalem as a seat of rebellion and therefore a threat to other nations and empires
 - Raised the possibility of negative financial impact on Artaxerxes's kingdom if the city again became a stronghold and helped the area gain independence

6

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- Letter to Artaxerxes
 - Presented themselves as being concerned citizens on behalf of the king
 - Mistakenly attributed the destruction of Jerusalem to rebellion against other kings and nations

7

Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- Artaxerxes's response
 - A search did reveal that Jerusalem had been a place from which strong kings had ruled over a significant area
 - Jerusalem had also been the place of rebellion, especially in the time of Nebuchadnezzar
 - The work was ordered to stop which caused the work on the temple to come to a halt

8

Some lessons

- While opposition is not a guarantee that we are doing God's work, opposition will nearly always arise in the process of joining God in what He is doing.
- We must always act with discernment at opportunities and circumstances we encounter.
- Opposition to God's work will come on multiple fronts.
- Opposition can and will impact the work but can never stop God's plan.

9
