

BUILDING WITH PURE HANDS. EZRA 4:1-5. 06/23/24. #06.

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4 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel, ²they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here." ³But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." ⁴Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, ⁵and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.
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1. Not without opposition

- a. Cyrus had sent the Jews back to rebuild the temple
 - a1. They had both a decree and a mandate
 - a2. Cyrus did not send troops to back up the decree
- b. From Ezra 4:1 to the end of Nehemiah the "people of the land" opposed the efforts of the Jews
 - a1. They used threats, trickery, letters to the king, deception, & slander to stop the Jews
 - a2. For over a century the Samaritans, Arabs, & other groups harassed the Jews, slowing down their work, & discouraging their efforts
- c. Every work for the Lord will be opposed

2. A kindly offer rejected

- a. The Samaritans came to Zerubbabel & Jeshua to offer to help them rebuild the temple
- b. Ever since King Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib of Assyria, had brought Elamites, Hamathites, & other people to mix with the Israelites, the new race, the Samaritans, worshipped God
 - a1. They also worshiped their own idols
 - a2. 2 Kn. 17:24-33 the king had sent back a Levitical priest to teach them how to worship
 - a3. Jer. 41:5 they even sacrificed at the ruins of the temple in Jerusalem
- c. They were syncretists (worshiping God & idols)
- d. They wanted a proper temple for Yahweh

- e. Zerubbabel & Jeshua turned down the offer
 - a1. "there is no part between you and us"
 - a2. They use as an excuse that King Cyrus had ordered the returning Jews to build the temple
 - a3. Syncretists would have watered down the effort to reestablish the worship of God
 - b1. Idol worship was the cause of the exile to begin with
 - b2. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 believers cannot be unequally yoked with unbelievers
 - f. 2 Cor. 11:14-15 more dangerous than partnering with unbelievers is partnering with false believers
 - a1. False worshipers introduce unbiblical doctrine & practices into the body of Christ
 - a2. Like a slow-growing cancer, false worshipers eat away at the vitality of the church
 - a3. Many liberal churches & denominations began as solid ministries that honor God, but deteriorated over time until they were churches in name only, dishonoring the name of Christ
 - g. It may seem that the Jews turned down a neighborly gesture that would have greatly helped them
 - a1. There would be more laborers
 - a2. There would be no opposition from neighbors
 - h. To accept help from compromisers would destroy them
 - a1. Neh. 13 those who help will want a say-so & part of leading the ministry
 - a2. Satan does his most damage through infiltration & not through a direct assault
 - i. Little compromises is death by 1,000 paper cuts
- ### 3. From offer of help to obstructive hindrance
- a. Once the Jews rejected the Samaritans offer of help, they became full-fledged enemies
 - b. For the next century they used threats & tricks to oppose the work on the temple & the wall
 - c. They hired counselors to hinder the work
 - a1. These infiltrated the project to discourage & disrupt the work
 - a2. The counselors sent false reports to the king
 - d. Instead of completing the temple during Cyrus's reign (died, 424 BC), it was finished well into Darius's reign
 - e. Not everyone who is friendly is there to help you
 - f. All scammers cheat you with a smile