

Tricks of the devil on those rebuilding their lives

Ezra 4:1-24

Ezra looks back and explains what happened during a 117 year period of conflict against the work of God. When you are rebuilding your life, the journey is not smooth. Two words are critical for understanding the chapter, “*adversaries*,” in v1 and “*accusation*,” in v6. It is as if Ezra is saying, “see, its always been this way.” Don’t be discouraged.” One commentator stated the focus of this chapter with clarity, “*We have in Ezra 4 is one of the most significant biblical pictures of how opposition to God’s work arises and apparently triumphs...*”

Words for children to listen for: 117 years, adversary, accusation, seed of the woman, bite your heels, Christmas story, tricks of the devil, compromise, letters, misrepresentation, believe a lie, discouragement, designer life, multigenerational, success junkie, bullies, story line, impressiveness.

Timeline:

- 536, The captives return with Zerubbabel: Altar built and Temple foundation laid.
- 536, The temple work stopped for 16 years
- 520, Temple work resumed
- 516, Temple finished after 4 years

Ezra 4 occurs over the reigns of 4 kings and 3 waves of returnees

- Cyrus, 539bc-530, Ez 1:3,
- Darius the Mede, 522-486, Cyrus son in law
- Ahasuerus, 486-464, Ez 2:6, also known as Xerxes the son of Darius
- Atraxerxes, 464-423

Total years: From Cyrus to Atraxerxes, 117 years

* Esarhaddon, approx. 700bc after Assyria conquered Israel

I. Temptation to compromise - Opposition from Cyrus to Darius, 536bc – the work stops for 16 years, 4:1-5, 24

Attempt to pollute the builders through compromise of syncretistic alliances

II. Accusatory letters - Opposition from Ahasuerus to Artaxerxes, 522bcff, 3:6-7

Attempt to destroy through accusatory letters

III. Slandorous misrepresentation - Rehum’s letter to Artaxerxes, v8-16

An attempt to destroy through slanderous misrepresentation to apply pressure for public censure

IV. People of influence believe a lie - Artaxerxes responds to the letter, v17-23

An example of self serving and poor research

V. Intimidation and discouragement – They stop the work and focus on themselves – The work ceased for 16 years, v24

Applications: