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## Opposition to Rebuilding the Temple

### Ezra 4: 1-24

During the ministry of Zerubbabel (to see link click [Ag](#) - The First Return).  
Compiled by the Chronicler from both the Ezra memoirs and the Nehemiah Memoirs

(see [Ac](#) - Ezra-Nehemiah from a Jewish Perspective: The Ezra Memoirs and the Nehemiah Memoirs).

And **they** built **the Temple** and lived happily ever after! Isn't that how it's supposed to be? Shouldn't that have been the outcome, especially since the exiles had seventy years to learn the lesson of their previous errors and make speedy progress since they had tasted the sweet mercies of **ADONAI**? But that is to take too optimistic a view of human nature. The story that now unfolds is one of retreat rather than progress. In this chapter we are given the reason why the work of rebuilding **the Temple** ground to a halt - opposition. It does not excuse the lack of progress; it merely explains the reason for it. The returning **Israelites** were responsible for **their** loss of enthusiasm. **The completion of the rebuilding of the Temple would take another twenty-one years, not because of the difficulty of the task, but because the people lost sight of their goal.** But for now at least, we need to take a look at the opposition and discouragement that came **their** way.

In describing the events in the books of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**, **the Chronicler**, with the advantage of hindsight, looks back on the historical landscape and refers to the opposition placed in the way of **the Jews** in chronological order. When discussing the problems of building **the Temple** in **Ezra 4:1-5**, it reminded **him** of similar problems with the rebuilding of **the walls of Jerusalem** about ninety years later, and so **Ezra 4:6-23** has been inserted, almost parenthetically, before the argument of the building of **the Temple** can once again be taken up in **Ezra 4:24**.

The point is that opposition is a constant theme from this time onward, running through **the First Return** headed by **Zerubbabel**, **the Second Return** headed by **Ezra**, to **the Third Return** headed by **Nehemiah**. It is an indication that **the Kingdom of God** is built within enemy-occupied territory (**Matthew 16:18**). **The Adversary** lurks behind the scenes, as is

**his** frequent strategy, content to lie hidden, hoping **the Lord's** children will forget all about **him** and take their frustrations out on **ADONAI** instead.



In **Ezra 4**, the ruler of demons used **the Samaritans** as **his** instruments of opposition. They are **his** people, to do **his** bidding, however unwittingly. As **a fallen angel, the tempter** is a defeated foe (see the commentary on **Isaiah Dp - How You Have Fallen From Heaven, O Morning Star**); **his** claims to sovereignty belong to fantasy literature and Hollywood pictures. But some people have always been enamored with **the wicked one's** grand delusion; a make-believe world of pretension in which **he** sets **himself** up as king is all too believable. The world is so easily duped into believing that **his** claims are true. Poor **Samaritans! They** were **Satan's** unwitting instruments. Pawns in a chess game with painful, and sometimes deadly, consequences. **Yeshua** warned that unbelievers are **the devil's** children (**John 8:44**), and **his** skill in manipulating individuals is legendary. We see the results in **his** encounter with **Eve** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ba - The Woman Saw the Fruit of the Tree and Ate It**), **Judas** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kc - Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**), and **Elymas** (see the commentary on **Acts Bn - Barnabas and Sha'ul Sent Out from Syrian Antioch**). We ignore this fact at our peril.

It is to the credit of **Zerubbabel** and **Jeshua** that **they** viewed the situation from the beginning as the work of **enemies (Ezra 4:1)**, and were alert to the possible consequences if **they** were tempted to cooperate. We would do well to model **their** thinking. Danger lurked there, and the two leaders were aware of it - not only for their own personal well-being, but also for the well-being of the righteous of the TaNaKh. We should be grateful for such discerning leadership when compromise with the world rears its ugly head. As Paul reminds us: **These things happened as examples for us (First Corinthians 10:6a).**<sup>65</sup>