

“Built for Worship”
Surrounded by Enemies – Ezra 4:1-5

A real enemy?

“Be alert & of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Pet 5:8)

“Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.” (Ezra 4:24)

The enemy will attack leaders of the church (v.1-3)

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, ‘Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’

But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, ‘You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.’

The enemy will attack the people in the church (v.4-5)

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

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Questions to think and pray through over the week ahead

When you hear the word ‘devil’ or the name ‘Satan’, what picture does that conjure up in your mind? Do you think much about or consider the devil’s work and influence in the world? Should you?

Why do you think the enemies approached Israel’s leaders first? How did the leaders spot the negative signs when they were approached with an offer of help from the surrounding people?

How did Jesus repel the temptations from the devil in the wilderness?

What sorts of unhelpful influences might you ask God to protect our church leaders from? In what other practical ways might you help leaders to stand firm?

Why do you think the building work came to a standstill for a number of years? Without reading ahead, what do you think might get it back on track again?!

Where do you think our ‘weak spots’ are as a church, and how do we help one another to stand firm?

What place does:

- Prayer
- Teaching biblical truths to each other
- Proper Christian relationships

play in helping and encouraging each other to keep going for Christ?