EZRA: RETURN TO THE WORD
REJECTION FROM OTHERS, EZRA 4

Memory Verse: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." Ezra 7:10



- Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns. -Eza 2:70
- And when the builders laid the **foundation of the temple** of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to **praise** the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. -Ezra 3:10
- The temple of the Old Covenant was built with actual stone.
  The temple of the New Covenant is the Body of Christ, which He has commissioned us to continue building.
- And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. -Matthew 27:50
- And behold, the **curtain of the temple was torn** in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. -Matthew 27:51
- So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, -Ephesians 2:19
- built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, -Ephesians 2:20
- in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a **holy temple** in the Lord." -Ephesians 2:21
- Now when the **adversaries** of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, -Ezra 4:1
- they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of **fathers' houses** and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here." -Ezra 4:2

Nation | Tribes | Clans

Fathers' Houses

1. Strong Households: Collectively Build a Strong Temple

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- Syncretism
  a. One belief system blending with another, leading to compromise.
- But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You **have nothing to do with us** in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." -Ezra 4:3

2. Protected Sanctity: A Sanctified Temple Must Be Protected with Vigilance

- Then the people of the land **discouraged** the people of Judah and made them afraid to build -Ezra 4:4

- Therefore make **a decree** that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me. -Ezra 4:21
- Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and **by force and power made them cease**. -Ezra 4:23
- Then **the work on the house of God** that is in Jerusalem **stopped**, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. -Ezra 4:24
- Now the **prophets**, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, **in the name of the God of Israel who was over them**. -Ezra 5:1
- Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and **began to rebuild the house of God** that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, **supporting them**. -Ezra 5:2
- Throughout Church history, the pendulum has swung back and forth between state support and state opposition.
    a. The Church has always been called to be <u>distinct</u>.
- "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." -Acts 5:28
    a. But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." -Acts 5:29

3. Distinct Pattern: The Church Must Lead the Way Rather than Reacting to the Changing Winds of Society

- 1. Strong Households 2. Protected Sanctity 3. Distinct Pattern

Questions

1. Read Ezra 4:1; Ezra 4:4-5; Genesis 3:1-13; Ephesians 6:11-16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. There have always been adversaries that seek to stop the mission of God. Whether external adversaries or internal temptations, how do adversaries frustrate and discourage the mission today? How can even good things act as adversaries to crowd out the purposes of God?
2. Read Ezra 4:2-3; 1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 12:2. As adversaries seek to get us off track, the family is the first line of defense. What is the state of the family in our society? What tends to crowd out the family from becoming strong and godly? How are households the building blocks of the church? In what ways is "syncretism" a temptation today?
3. Read Ezra 4:23-5:2; Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:2; John 19:10-16; Isaiah 33:22; Acts 2:41-47.
   According to scripture, Christians are called to live as a distinct people, respecting and obeying government as a legitimate authority unless government prevents obedience to God, the greatest authority. How can we live and stay focused as a distinct people today? How can we have a greater focus on God's Word and the church community rather than the constant winds of the news cycle?