

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families for the week of February 9, 2020

Opposition

This week, Pastor Steve Shelby preached from [Ezra 4:6-13](#).

⁶ And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated.

⁸ Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows: ⁹ Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the governors, the officials, the Persians, the men of Erech, the Babylonians, the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites,

¹⁰ and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River. ¹¹ (This is a copy of the letter that they sent.) "To Artaxerxes the king: Your servants, the men of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now ¹² be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. ¹³ Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired.

- Why is Ezra recording all of this history? How does one view history?
- We must understand that some wars—and some enemies—don't offer the option of neutrality or of ignoring the conflict. When an enemy wants nothing but your defeat and annihilation, neutrality means choosing death. The war raging in the unseen world for the souls of human beings is that kind of war. Neutrality and negotiation is not on the table.
- Ever since Eden, we are participating in a conflict of rebellion.
- "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule[a] all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days." ([Revelation 12:1-6](#))
- What are the tactics and strategies of our enemy? Primarily lies/deception and discouragement.
- A quick historical note: Historians estimate that the Persians collected between 170 and 300 million dollars a year in taxes from their provinces. It is estimated that Judah paid around 4 million a year. Money is not what is at issue here so much as sovereignty and political control.
- Lies and deception lead to fear and then to discouragement.
- There is also a resounding silence in this passage over these decades. It is the silence of good leadership.
- Finally, what will help us to overcome?