

EZRA CHAPTER 4

¹ And they that afflicted Judah and Benjamin heard, that the children of the captivity were building a house to the Lord God of Israel. ² And they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of families, and said to them, "We will build with you; for as you *do*, we seek *to serve* our God, and we do sacrifice to Him from the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here." ³ Then Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel said to them, "*It is* not for us and you to build a house to our God, for we ourselves will build together to the Lord our God, as Cyrus the king of the Persians commanded us." ⁴ And the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and hindered them in building, ⁵ and *continued* hiring *people* against them, plotting to frustrate their counsel, all the days of Cyrus king of the Persians, and until the reign of Darius king of the Persians.

⁶ And in the reign of Ahasuerus, even in the beginning of his reign, they wrote a letter against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ And in the days of Artaxerxes, Tabeel wrote peaceably to Mithradath and to the rest of his fellow servants: the tax collector wrote to Artaxerxes king of the Persians a writing in the Syrian tongue, and *the same* interpreted. ⁸ Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote an epistle against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, *saying*, ⁹ "Thus has judged Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of our fellow servants, the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the people of Persia, the Erech, the Babylonians, the Shushan, the Dehavites, ¹⁰ and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnapper removed, and settled them in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *of them* beyond the river." ¹¹ This *is* the contents of the letter which they sent to him: "To King Artaxerxes, from your servants the men *of the region* beyond the river: ¹² Be it known to the king, that the Jews who came up to us from you, have come to Jerusalem, the rebellious and wicked city which they are building, and its walls are set in order, and they have established the foundations of it. ¹³ Now then let it be known to the king, that if that city be built up, and its walls completed, you shall have no tribute, neither will they pay *any tribute*; and this *shall* hinder kings. ¹⁴ And it is not lawful for us to see the dishonor of the king. Therefore have we sent and made known *the matter* to the king, ¹⁵ that examination may be made in your fathers' book of record. And you shall find, and you shall know that this city *is* rebellious, and does harm to kings and countries, and there are in the midst of it from very old time refuges for *runaway* slaves. Therefore this city has been made desolate. ¹⁶ We therefore declare to the king, that if this city is rebuilt, and its walls are set up, you shall have no peace."

¹⁷ Then the king sent to Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their fellow servants who dwelt in Samaria, and the rest beyond the river, *saying*, "Peace"; and he said, ¹⁸ "The tax collector whom you sent to us has been called before me. ¹⁹ And a decree has been made by me, and we have examined, and found that city of old time exalts itself against kings, and that rebellions and desertions take place within it. ²⁰ And there were powerful kings in Jerusalem, and they ruled over all the *country* beyond the river, and abundant revenues and tribute were given to them. ²¹ Now therefore make a decree to

stop the work of those men, and that city shall no more be built. ²² See that you be careful of the decree, *not* to be remiss concerning this matter, lest at any time destruction should abound to the harm of kings."

²³ Then the tax collector of King Artaxerxes read *the letter* before Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and his fellow servants. And they went in haste to Jerusalem and through Judah, and caused them to cease with horses and an *armed* force.

²⁴ Thus the work of the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was at a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of the Persians.