

EZRA 4 DISCERNMENT WINS

CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH-ESTHER

538-515BC	483-473BC	457BC	13 Year Gap	444-425BC
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10		Book of Nehemiah
First Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile	58 Year Gap	Second Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile		Third Return of Jews from Babylonian Exile

Alan Redpath, [Victorious Christian Service](#):

“No winning without warfare
 No opportunity without opposition
 No victory without vigilance.
**“For whenever the people of God say, ‘Let us arise and build,’
 Satan says, ‘Let me arise and oppose.’”** ¹

¹ Victorious Christian Service, Alan Redpath, Fleming H. Revell Company, MCMLVIII

Warren Wiersbe: “Opportunity and opposition usually go together; and the greater the opportunity, the greater the opposition.”²

1 Cor. 16:9 “For a great and effective door has opened to me,” wrote Paul, “and there are many adversaries.”

The Jews from Babylon were believing in a Faithful God to do just what He promised He would do:

- Restore the Temple
- Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

2 Thessalonians 3:1–5

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,

2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

3 **But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**

4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Philippians 1:6 **being confident** of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Obedience is the sweetest sacrifice to the Lord

- No other Gods!
The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Heroic*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: ChariotVictor Pub., 1997), 25.

Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee. —Cowper

1 Now when the **adversaries of Judah and Benjamin** heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel,

2 they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."

- But wait, shouldn't we all want to work with those that don't agree with us? ³
 - Where's the spirit of the Ecumenical movement?
 - KEY WORD HERE USED: "**adversaries**"; "**enemies**"
 - These were adversaries that had no interest in serving the LORD GOD of Israel – they were serving their own interests.
 - They had a history of opposition and pagan idolatry.

2 Kings 17:33–36

33 **They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods**—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

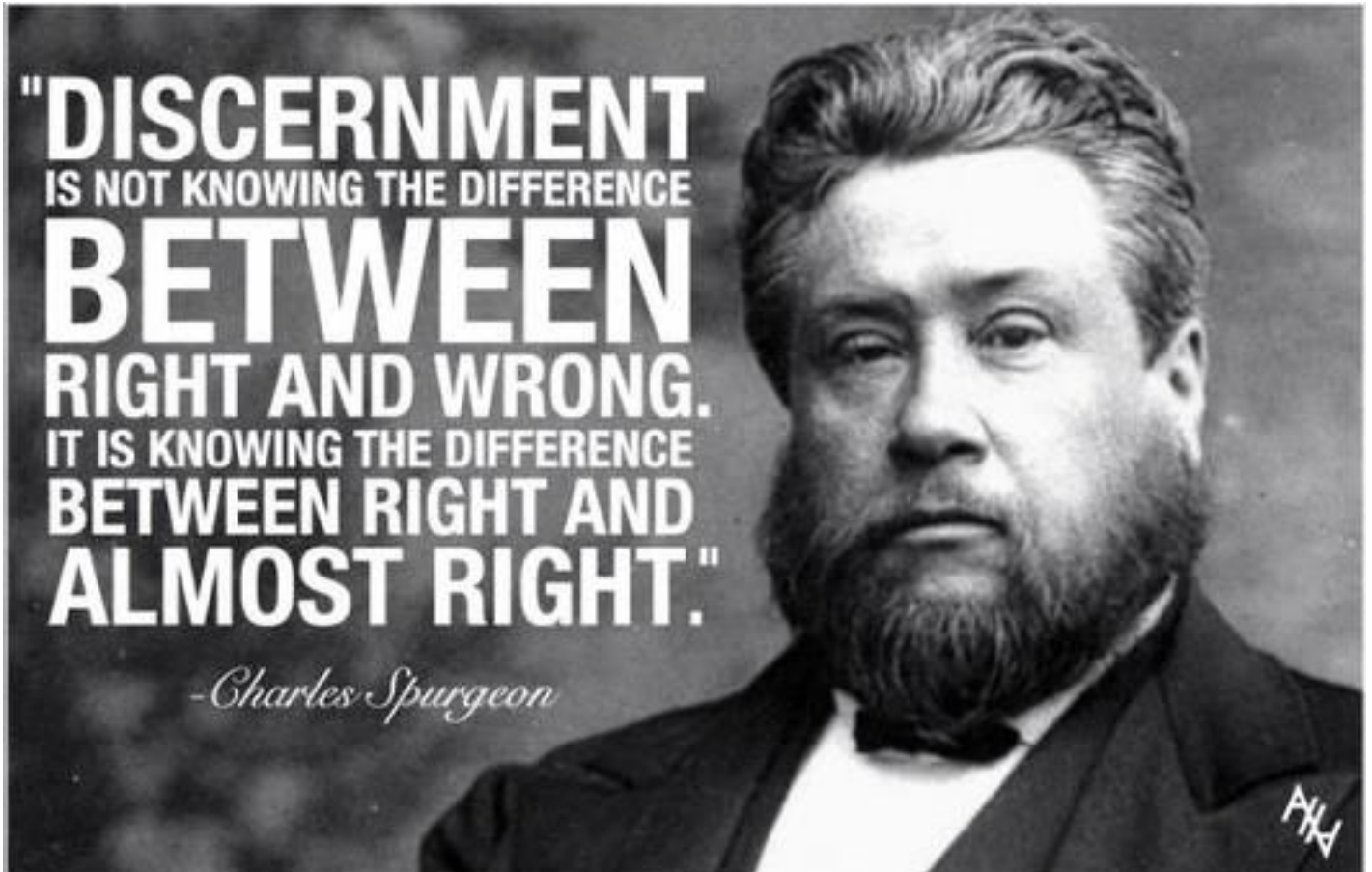
34 **To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD,** nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel,

35 with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them;

³ Blenkinsopp (*Ezra-Nehemiah*, 107) explains: "The leaders in the province of Samaria may well have seen the emergence of a new, aggressive presence in Judah, and one which enjoyed the favor of the imperial government, as threatening.... An offer to share the labor, and presumably also the expense, of rebuilding the sanctuary would have been taken to entail, and would in fact have entailed, a share in controlling the temple itself with all that implied."

36 but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice.

DISCERNMENT – the Holy Spirit enabled ability to understand the source of things seeking to enter your life.



1 Thessalonians 5:21–22

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

1 John 4:1–3

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

Ephesians 4:11–16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

ENEMY'S TACTICS:

1. We'll help you to build!

- a. Infiltration
- b. Redirection
- c. Confusion

2. We'll stop you from building!

- a. Fear
 - i. Threats
 - ii. Lying to authorities
- b. Gossip, rumors, lies
 - i. Major on minor issues they don't agree with

Discernment wins when:

- God's Word is placed above doctrine and experience
- God's people are given grace above judgment and condemnation
- No one is jumping to conclusions

Discernment loses when:

- The church is divided – Matthew 18 is not pursued as a rule for all church conflict

- Twisted “facts” replace truth and harm decent people.

4 Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,
5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.
6 In the reign of Ahasuerus⁴, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.
7 In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.
8 Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion:

The Kings of Ezra 4

Effect on Temple	Name in Ezra 4	Actual Name	Length of Reign
Issued decree to build temple	Cyrus	Cyrus the Great	9 years after decree
Did not hinder the work	Ahaseurus	Cambyses II	8 years
Stopped work on temple	Artaxerxes	Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)	7 months
Encouraged work to finish	Darius	Darius Hystaspes (Darius the Great)	36 years

⁴ This could not refer to the Ahasuerus of [Esther 1:1](#), who was the father of Cyrus. Ahasuerus is simply a title meaning Mighty, one claimed by several Persian kings. Here it may refer to Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. It couldn't refer to Cyrus himself, for he is mentioned in this record ([Ezra 4:5](#)); he was the one that decreed liberation for Israel in the first year of his reign ([Ezra 1:1-4](#)).



1. They troubled them in building – conflict in the building from this point all the way through the Book of Nehemiah.
2. They hired counselors against them to frustrate their purposes
3. They wrote accusations against them to King Ahasuerus
4. They wrote accusations against them to King Artaxerxes
 - a. Jerusalem is historically a rebellious and evil city
 - i. They incite sedition
 - b. Tax rebels

Frustrations In Life:

- Death to a vision
 - Abram's dream of many children –
 - Wife laughed at God's promises
 - Hagar & Ishmael
 - Sent to kill his child of promise
 - Joseph's dream of his brothers bowing before him
 - Mocked and hated by his brothers
 - Sold to slavery by his own family
 - Potiphar's wife – destroying the innocent gain of a hard working young man
 - Prison life – forgotten by those that promised to help
 - Years of solitude and grief
 - David's dream of being King of Israel –
 - Forgotten in the fields
 - Goliath and 4 giant brothers

- Saul's relentless pursuit of David – 18 years
- Unguarded desires of the flesh – Bathsheba & Urriah
- Your ungodly children seeking to kill you
 - Solomon destroying all you worked for
- Haman seeking to kill every Jew in Persia
- Jesus birth followed by Herod killing all children under 2 years old.
- Mark 5 – a poor woman, 12 year flow of blood
 - Declared unclean by her family
 - Every failed physician
 - Every year getting worse
- John 5 – an invalid for 38 years trying to jump in the pool
- Lazarus dead for 4 days before Jesus arrives

All of these unfair events came around for the Lord.

- Where did success arise?
 - In FAITH

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, **but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them** and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Philippians 4:6–7

6 Be **anxious** for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- **25.225 μεριμνάω**: (derivative of μέριμνα ‘worry,’ 25.224) **to have an anxious concern, based on apprehension about possible danger or misfortune—‘to be worried about, to be anxious about.’** τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ προσθεῖναι πῆχυν; ‘can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?’ Lk 12:25; μὴ μεριμνήσητε πῶς ἢ τί λαλήσητε ‘do not worry about how or what you are going to say’ Mt 10:19.⁵

Keys here:

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 312.

- **The goal:** to not be worried about anything
- **The method:**
 - Let every concern be known to God
 - By prayer
 - By supplication
 - With thanksgiving
- **The product:**
 - The peace of God – which, BTW, surpasses all understanding
 - Will guard your heart
 - Will guard your mind
 - ALL – through Christ Jesus!

Philippians 4:8–9

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, **and the God of peace will be with you.**

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions—representatives of the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the people of Persia and Erech and Babylon and Shushan, the Dehavites, the Elamites,
10 and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnapper took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and the remainder beyond the River—and so forth.
11 (This is a copy of the letter that they sent him) To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth:
12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.
13 Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, **they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.**
14 Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king,
15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.
16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.

17 The king sent an answer: To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River: Peace, and so forth.

18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me.

19 And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it.

20 There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them.

21 Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.

22 Take heed now that you do not fail to do this.

Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings?

23 Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.

24 Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

It would seem that the Devil, the Flesh and the World won – BUT GOD!

Ephesians 2:1-7

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 **But God**, who is rich in mercy,

because of His great love with which He loved us,

5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.