

Story Time - Read the story to the children
Lesson 121: THE OPPOSITION OF REBUILDING
EZRA 4:1-24

Many people living in the area were against the people of Judah and Benjamin. These enemies heard that the people who had come from captivity were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel. So they came to Zerubbabel and to the family leaders and said, "Let us help you build. We are the same as you, seek your God just like you do. We have offered sacrifices to your God since the time King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here." But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other family leaders of Israel answered, "No, you people cannot help us build a temple for our God. Only we can build the Temple for the LORD. He is the God of Israel. This is what King Cyrus of Persia commanded us to do." So the enemies began to discourage them and tried to frighten them in order to stop them from building the Temple. These enemies hired government officials to work against the people of Judah. The officials constantly did things to stop the Jews' plans to build the Temple. This continued the whole time that Cyrus was the king and kept going until Darius became the king of Persia - a very long time! These enemies even wrote letters to the king of Persia trying to stop the Jews. They wrote one letter the year that Xerxes became the king of Persia. Later, when Artaxerxes became the new king of Persia, some of these men wrote another letter complaining about the Jews. The men who wrote the letter were named Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the other people in their group. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated into the Persian language. Then Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against the people of Jerusalem. They wrote their letter to Artaxerxes the king. This is what they wrote: From Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary, and from the judges and important officials over the men from Tripolis, Persia, Erech, and Babylon, and from the Elamites from Susa, and from the other people who the great and powerful Ashurbanipal moved to the city of Samaria and other places in the country that is west of the Euphrates River. This is the copy of the letter sent to King Artaxerxes: From your servants living in the area west of the Euphrates River. King Artaxerxes, we wish to inform you that the Jews you sent from there are now in Jerusalem. They are trying to rebuild that terrible city. The people there have always rebelled against other kings. Now they have almost finished repairing the foundations and building the walls. Also, King Artaxerxes, you should know that

if Jerusalem and its walls are rebuilt, the people of Jerusalem will stop paying their taxes. They will stop sending money to honor you. They also will stop paying customs fees, and the king will lose all that money. We have a responsibility to the king. We don't want to see this happen, so we are sending this letter to inform the king. King Artaxerxes, we suggest that you search the writings of the kings who ruled before you. You will see in the writings that Jerusalem always rebelled against other kings. It has caused much trouble for other kings and nations. Many rebellions have started in this city since ancient times. That is why Jerusalem was destroyed. King Artaxerxes, we wish to inform you that if this city and its walls are rebuilt, you will lose control of the area west of the Euphrates River. Then King Artaxerxes sent this answer: To Rehum the commanding officer, Shimshai the secretary, and all the people with them living in Samaria and other places west of the Euphrates River. Greetings: The letter you sent us has been translated and read to me. I gave an order for the writings of the kings that were ruling before me to be searched. The writings were read, and we found out that Jerusalem has a long history of rebellion against kings of other countries. Jerusalem has been a place where rebellion and revolt has happened often. Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over it and over the whole area west of the Euphrates River. Their kings received taxes, customs, fees, and tribute. Now, you must give an order for these men to stop work. That order must be given to keep Jerusalem from being rebuilt until I say it can be rebuilt. Be careful not to overlook this matter. We should not let the building of Jerusalem continue. If that work continues, I will not get any more money from Jerusalem. So a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes sent was read to Rehum, Shimshai the secretary, and the people with them. They went very quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem and forced them to stop building. So the work stopped on God's Temple in Jerusalem. The work did not continue until the second year that a man named Darius was made king of Persia.

121. THE OPPOSITION OF REBUILDING (EZRA 4:1-24)



“So a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes sent was read to Rehum, Shimshai the secretary, and the people with them. They went very quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem and forced them to stop building.”

EZRA 4:23

121. THE OPPOSITION OF REBUILDING

EZRA 4:1-24

MEMORY VERSE:

"They went very quickly to the Jews in Jerusalem and forced them to stop building." EZRA 4:23

TRUE OR FALSE

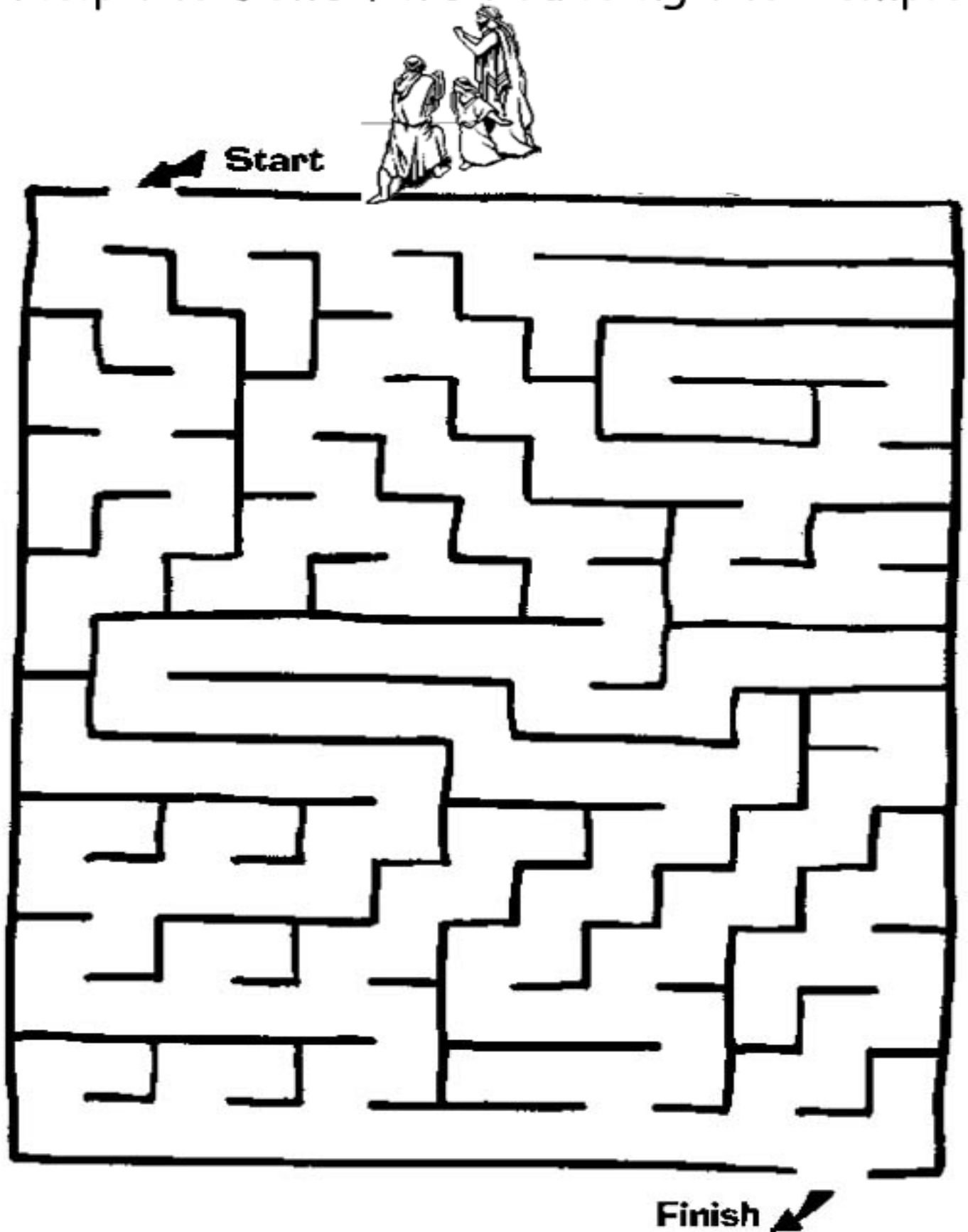
1. When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people who had come from captivity were building the Temple of the LORD God of Israel they came to Zerubbabel and the leaders of the people and said, "Let us build the Temple with you because we serve and worship the same God that you do". TRUE or FALSE
2. Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the people agreed and let them build the Temple along with the Jews. TRUE or FALSE
3. The people who lived there tried to keep the people of Judah from building the Temple. TRUE or FALSE
4. They helped them build the Temple. TRUE or FALSE
5. They hired government officials to work against the people trying to build the Temple. TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1. What did they do to try to keep the Jews from building the Temple? Did they write letters?
2. What did some of the letters say about the Jews?
3. Did the letters say that the Jews were obedient to other kings? Or did they say that the Jews were rebellious?
4. Do you know what rebellious means? It means to disobey and cause trouble.
5. What did king Artaxerxes do when he read the letters? Did he go and search all the writings of the kings before him to see what they said about the Jews?
6. What happened when king Artaxerxes wrote a letter saying to stop the Jews? Did the enemies go and force them to stop building the Temple?

Lesson 121

Help the Jews finish building the Temple!



Lesson 121 Craft

JEREMIAH 29:11

You may want to write this out for the younger children, or write one and make copies that can be cut and pasted onto the parchment. After doing this, glue tongue depressors across the top and bottom edge of the paper. With a marker, color the tongue depressors brown. Allow the glue to dry and then roll the paper to look like a scroll. Explain to the children that no matter what the decree is toward us, our heavenly King has decreed that He is for us!

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving that the Lord is for us and is faithful to keep all of His promises. May we turn to the Lord for help whenever we face opposition. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.