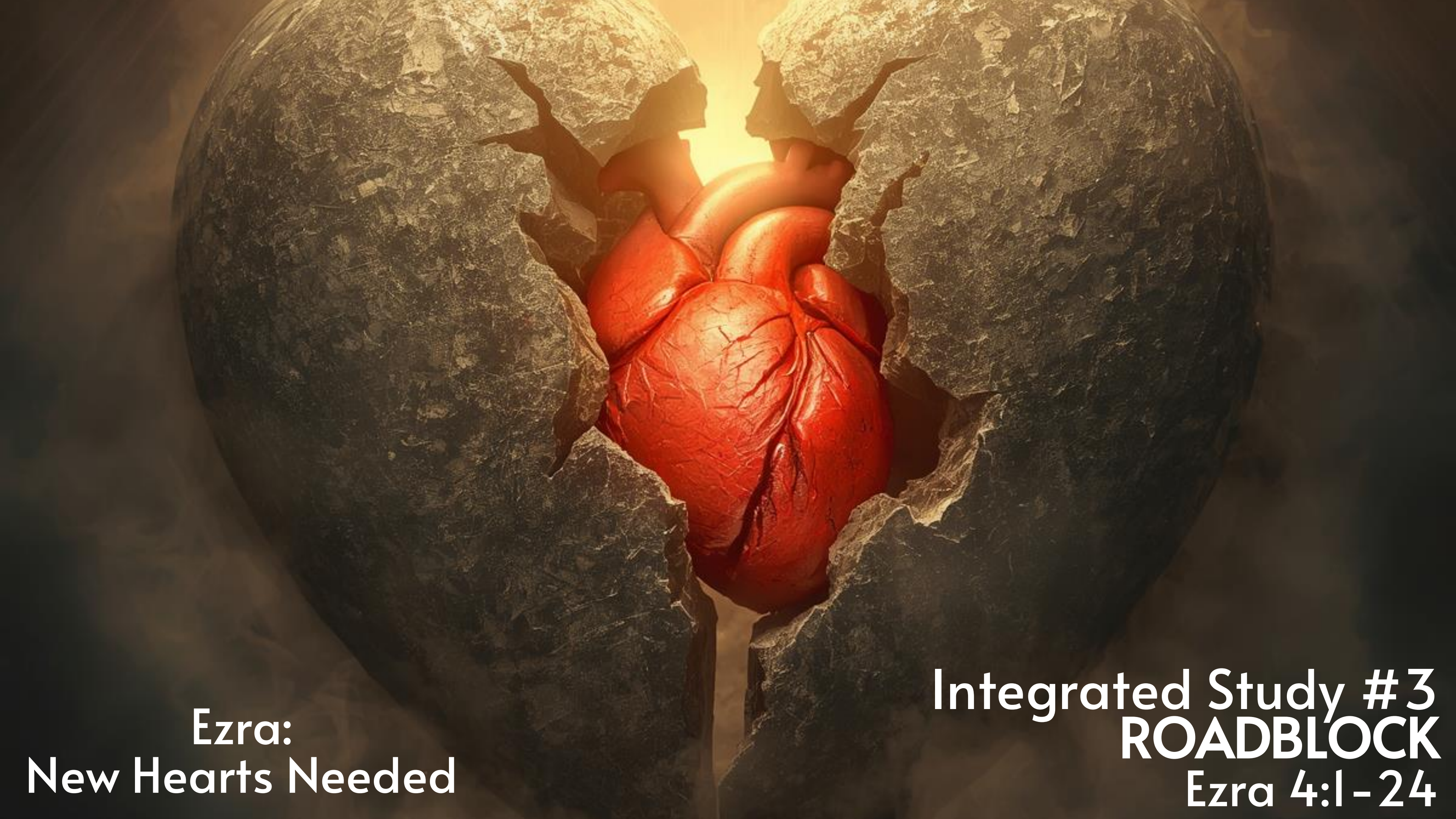
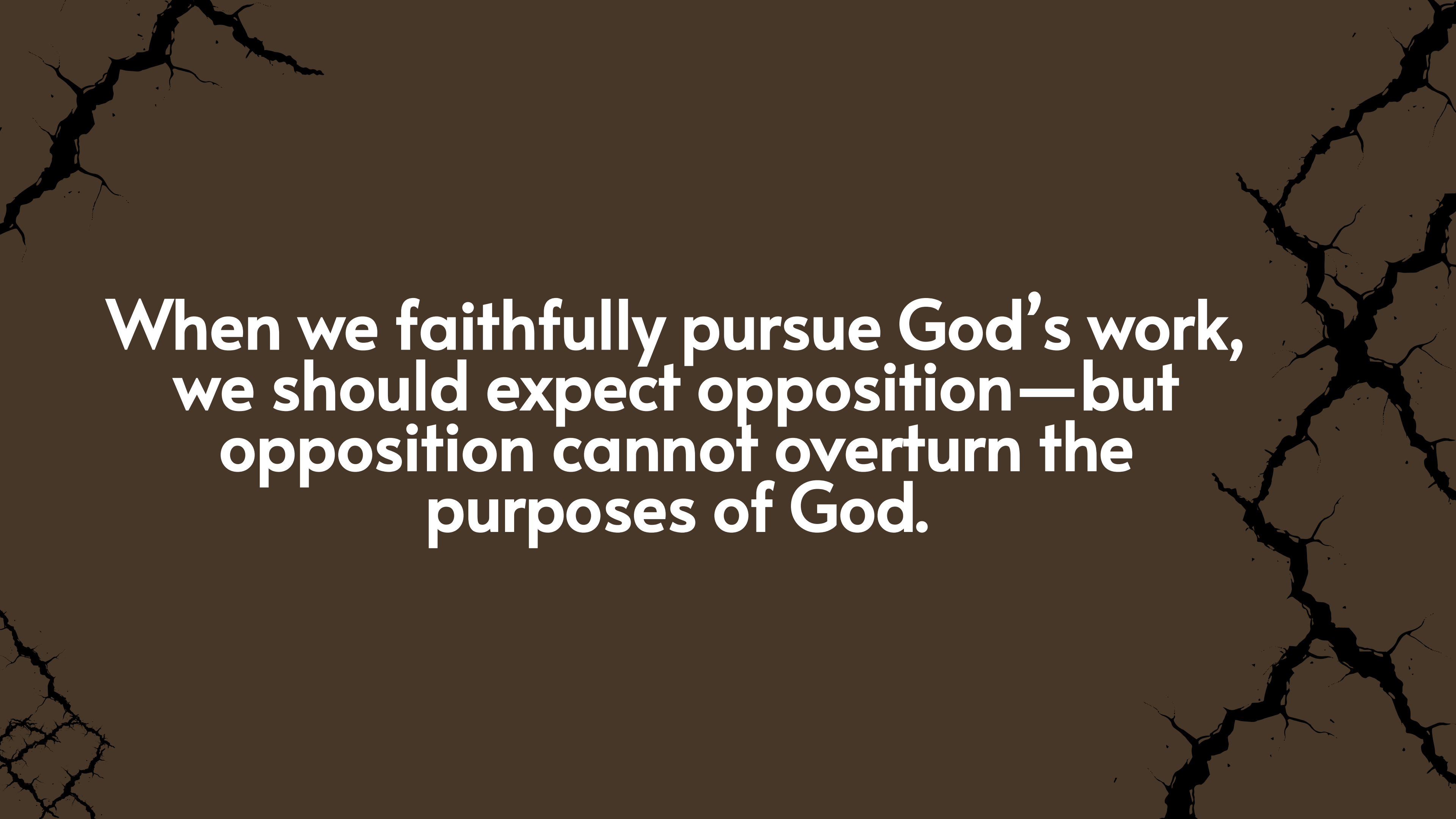




Ezra:
New Hearts Needed

Integrated Study #3
ROADBLOCK
Ezra 4:1-24





**When we faithfully pursue God's work,
we should expect opposition—but
opposition cannot overturn the
purposes of God.**

SO HOW DO WE GUARD OUR HEARTS?

1. Beware of compromised cooperation (v.1-3)
2. Don't be surprised by determined opposition (v.4-23)
3. Trust God when the work appears to stop (v.24)

I. BEWARE OF COMPROMISED COOPERATION (v.1-3)

Ezra 4:1-2

¹ When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, ² they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

I. BEWARE OF COMPROMISED COOPERATION (v.1-3)

Ezra 4:3

³ But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

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2 Kings 17:24

The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns.

I. BEWARE OF COMPROMISED COOPERATION (v.1-3)

- The Assyrians repopulated the land with people from other nations. (2 Kings 17:24-33)

2 Kings 17:27

²⁷ Then the king of Assyria gave this order: “Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.”

I. BEWARE OF COMPROMISED COOPERATION (v.1-3)

- The Assyrians repopulated the land with people from other nations. (2 Kings 17:24-33)

2 Kings 17:28

²⁸ So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Lord.

I. BEWARE OF COMPROMISED COOPERATION (v.1-3)

- The Assyrians repopulated the land with people from other nations. (2 Kings 17:24-33)

2 Kings 17:29

²⁹ Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places.

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2 Kings 17:32-33

³² They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. ³³ They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.

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- God instructed them how to worship Him (Deut 12:5-7, 13-14)

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- We need to beware of compromise in our own hearts.
 - ASK: Have I simply added Jesus to my life or surrendered my life to Him?
 - ASK: Are there loyalties in my life that compete with my loyalty to Christ?
 - ASK: Is my worship shaped by what God has said—or simply by what seems right to me?

2. DON'T BE SURPRISED BY DETERMINED OPPOSITION (v.4-23)

Ezra 4:4-5

⁴ Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. ⁵ They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

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 - v.6-23 Opposition to rebuilding the walls & city during the reigns of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes.
- Not an isolated event but a consistent pattern of determined opposition.

2. DON'T BE SURPRISED BY DETERMINED OPPOSITION (v.4-23)

Ezra 4:6-8

⁶ At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. ⁷ And in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his associates wrote a letter to Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic script and in the Aramaic language.

⁸ Rehum the commanding officer and Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows:

2. DON'T BE SURPRISED BY DETERMINED OPPOSITION (v.4-23)

- This pattern of opposition is not just an Old Testament thing (1 Peter 4:12).

1 Peter 4:12

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

2. DON'T BE SURPRISED BY DETERMINED OPPOSITION (v.4-23)

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- Faithfulness to God will sometimes bring us into conflict with the values of the world.

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James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

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- Don't be surprised - faithfulness to God is sometimes difficult (Mt. 7:13-14) but it is ALWAYS worth it in the end (Rev 3:21).
- PRAY — For God's help to stand firm and remain faithful when opposition comes. (cf. Isaiah 35:3-4; 1 Peter 5:10)

3. TRUST GOD WHEN THE WORK APPEARS TO STOP (v.24)

Ezra 4:24

“Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

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- SO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
 - "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." - Rom 12:12
 - Don't let roadblocks or divine delays become an excuse for unfaithfulness.
 - ASK: What has God promised?
 - ASK: What has God commanded?
 - ASK: What faithful step of obedience can I take today?