

# 1<sup>st</sup> TH1NGS F1RST 3 – Opposition

## 1<sup>st</sup> TH1ngs F1RST title

Hello and welcome to Redemption Church in Plano Tx. My name is Chris Fluitt and I am glad for everyone joining us in-person and online.

I hope your new year is going well. Our poor Dallas Cowboys met their demise in the NFL playoffs last week, and we are all trying to get over the fact that our team ran the clock out on themselves while in scoring position. But everyone cheer up; next year is our year! For the 27<sup>th</sup> season in a row... next year is our year.

While our Super Bowl dreams have ended, we are still in the very middle of our 1<sup>st</sup> TH1NGS F1RST series. We are taking a look at the book of Ezra. The

story of Ezra features a return to a city to rebuild what has fallen apart. We think this storyline really fits with our new year where we set out to rebuild broken things in our lives.

### Week 1 – They built an Alter First

They built the altar and kept coming back to that altar. The altar is a meeting place with God. BEFORE TODAY IS OVER we want to give you an opportunity to have a meeting place with God.

### Week 2 – They built a foundation first

We talked about the importance of a foundation. We talked about how a foundation defines the fate of a building. Remember that altars are easy to build and cost you nothing... but foundations will cost you. Foundations take time,

money, and energy, but they are worth it. A foundation will ensure that what we build will last.

The people in Ezra 3 were moved to worship when the foundation was laid. They worshipped, they sang, they shouted, and they wept. It was a loud commotion and celebration. Build a foundation first and rejoice and celebrate the foundation.

Israel is on a roll! They have some real momentum behind them: set free from exiled slavery, back in their own homeland, in good standing with God through an altar, and the foundation laid for the temple to be rebuilt. Things were going better than they had for

generations! What would be the next exciting thing they would accomplish?

Let's read... Ezra 4

Ezra 4:1 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel,(NIV)

The enemies..

Notice this.

- They were doing good.
- They were honoring and obeying God.
- They were making good decisions.
- They were accomplishing goal after goal.

And what is their reward for all these good deeds? Their enemies heard about it and showed up.

You ever feel that way? God I've been doing good. I've been making good decisions and seeing accomplishment. Why do my enemies show up when I am doing good? Why do these bad things happen?

## **Opposition is coming**

You need to know that opposition is coming. At some point this year you are going to face difficulty. At some point in your marriage or family life you are going to face a stressful time. At some point in your finances, in your career, or in your spiritual life – you are going to face an enemy.

Often we think opposition means that we have done wrong. Logically it makes sense to think this way. If you reap what you sow... and we are reaping opposition... it must mean that we have sown evil bad things...

I have car trouble... God must be punishing me.

I am sick... it must be because I did something wrong... even though we aren't sure what it is...

Let's speak to this quickly. This is bad theology. This is the theology that is presented in the book of Job. Job's friends tell Job that all the calamity happening to him is the direct result of some evil he had done. They tell Job that the opposition he faces is caused by his

own failures and short comings.

Ultimately, they arrive at the false conclusion that God has brought terrible judgments upon Job.

But they are wrong and God Himself tells them they are wrong. Those conclusions are still wrong, today.

## **God is not Passive-Aggressive**

GOD IS NOT PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE. Ever have a passive aggressive argument with someone? They would say these things, give these looks, and communicate cryptically and mysteriously to let you know something was wrong. It would perhaps be subtle, but you could pick up on it if you were paying attention. Yet, although you knew something was

wrong, you very rarely knew WHAT was wrong.

At times it will even cause you to ask, “Did I do something wrong?” And they respond with the strange ominous, “It’s fine.” You know something is wrong, but you have no clue what it is.

This incorrect theology that opposition means we have done something wrong, usually brings us to the place where we know something is wrong, but we don’t exactly what it is.

God is not passive-aggressive. When you are doing wrong, God tells you very directly. He speaks to you. He sends other people to speak to you. He gets your attention. He sends warnings that



hit you in all your 5 senses plus your soul.  
God does not leave you wondering.

So, stop thinking that opposition is God's passive-aggressive way of punishing you.!  
Jesus said...

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."(NIV)

## **Opposition is Coming**

Jesus says opposition is coming, yet a world of opposition should not steal your peace... because Jesus has overcome the world.

Jesus does not say “In this world you will have trouble because of the evil you have done...” No Jesus is speaking to disciples who have done good, were trying to do good, and who would continue to do good, but still, even then, opposition would come.

OPPOSITION IS A PART OF LIFE. Do not think an opposition-life is the sign you are doing good. That was not the case anywhere in your Bible!

Expect to face opposition this week. Do not be caught off guard by difficulty.

**Face your opposition first**

Since Opposition is coming you must face your opposition first

You have a city to rebuild. You have a life to rebuild. Your opposition will try to stand in your way – you must face your opposition first, or you will never see the life you want.

Your opposition is sneaky. Watch what Israel's opposition does in Ezra 4:2.

Ezra 4:2 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."(NIV)

“Let us help you build...” Who wouldn't want help? “We seek your God...” Who wonderful is that?

# Your opposition can appear

**friendly** Beware the enemy that says they want to help you.

The truth is they did not want to help. The truth is that they did not worship the God of Israel only. They may have given sacrifice to the God of Israel.. but they also sacrificed to other God's.

Notice the timing of the opposition. They show up in Ezra 4. What happened in Ezra 3? Israel had just laid the foundation and then the opposition shows up.

The foundation is a lot of work. They did not come to help with that. Foundations cost. They did not help with the funding of the project. If someone really has come to help you – they will get their

hands dirty. These people showed up after the hard work was done and then say they want to “help.”

Ezra 4:3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua 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."(NIV)

**Don't let just anyone build on your foundation!**

Had they agreed to let these people help they would have brought their false God's into the temple... they would have slowed down the work that needed to be done

by arguing... the people that had not laid the foundation would have built a different work than what was imagined.

**Don't let just anyone build on your foundation!**

There will always be people who will show up to spend YOUR MONEY. ...to spend YOUR TIME. ...to exploit YOUR TALENTS. BE CAREFUL! THESE PEOPLE MIGHT NOT BE YOUR FRIENDS!

Israel said, "You have no part with us in building a temple to God." Sometimes you need to tell people, "You have no part in this." You aren't being ugly. You are safeguarding your future.

Some people are part of your opposition, and you must face your opposition first.

Israel, who had been slaves for 70 years, in this moment made a stand and faced their opposition. They said we will be making our own decisions on this temple. This is what we have decided to build for God.

They faced the opposition and started building the temple of God...

Ezra 4:4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.(NIV)

Ezra 4:5 They hired counselors 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.(NIV)

Ezra 4:6 At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.(NIV)

These enemies approached Israel as friends after the hard work was done. When they were not allowed to control the project, these enemies began to show their real motive. They wanted to stop the building of Israel.

-They discouraged the people.

-They tried to create fear.

-They hired counselors... They surely did nothing to contribute to the building of the foundation, but they hired counselors to work against the effort.

-They attempted to frustrate the plans.



-Finally they tattle-tailed... They lodged false accusations to the King of Persia.

These are not friends.

“Kind of” friends do not exist. You can’t “kind of” be friends. You are either for or against, there is no middle ground. As Jesus said...

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.(NIV)

**Lord help us to discern who is for us and who is against us**

Here is the letter they sent to Xerxes

Ezra 4:12 The king should know that the Jews who came up to us from you

have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations.(NIV)

Ezra 4:13 Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and the royal revenues will suffer.(NIV)

Ezra 4:14 Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonored, we are sending this message to inform the king,(NIV)

The king read this and wrote back...

Ezra 4:21 Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order.(NIV)

Ezra 4:24 Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill..

It looked like the opposition had won. They pulled a power play; Israel was forced to stop their progress. Israel had an altar, a foundation, but they might never have a completed city...

Don't you hate it when it looks like you are going to lose, and your opposition is going to win? Somewhere in your life right now there is an opposition. In your school or on your job someone might be

trying to discourage you, frighten you, control you, and frustrate you.

Sometimes it looks like our opposition is going to win.

This is where most people make huge mistakes.

-Some give up completely.

-Some lash out and hurt their own reputation.

HERE IS WHAT YOU SHOULD DO!

**Remember: God gave this vision**

We built an altar. We built a foundation. God has led us to now do this work. Do not forget that it was God who led you to this point.

God gave the vision but... it looked like it would never come to pass. God had given the command that there should be a temple in Jerusalem... but now that looked impossible.

## **Timeline of a Vision**

I want to give you an important piece of information. We will call this the timeline of a vision.

**STEP 1 The Vision is born. God has given the vision. He has given the mission or the command.**

**STEP 2 Someone works the vision. They set out to fulfill the vision God has given.**

Now step 3 is an important step...

### STEP 3 They fail and the vision dies.

As hard as they try, it is not enough. As much effort, time, and heart as they put into what God has called them to do, it is not enough. The project comes to a standstill. They fail miserably and the vision dies... but remember: God gave the vision.

When God gives a vision step 3 is necessary, because there is a step 4.

### STEP 4 God Supernaturally resurrects the vision and brings it to pass

Check you Bible! This pattern happens all over the place.

ABRAHAM is given the vision to be the father of a great nation. He tries to fulfill the vision. He fails and can't have a son. GOD supernaturally resurrects the vision and Isaac is born.

DAVID is given the vision and anointed King. He tries to fulfill the vision. He fails – another man named Saul is the king and stands in the way. Even after Saul dies, his son Ish-bosheth is made king of Israel. It now seems impossible for the vision to come to pass, but GOD supernaturally does what David never could do and David becomes the best King Israel ever had.

JESUS CHRIST was sent into the world to save it. He works to fulfill that vision. Everyone loses hope as Jesus dies on the cross. BUT 3 DAYS LATER the vision is resurrected. Jesus is Alive!

**No matter the opposition, God can resurrect the vision!**

## **God gives the vision**

God had given Israel this vision of a Temple! They worked to fulfill the vision. They had now failed, and the temple stood unfinished under the orders of the biggest & strongest nation on the planet.

The bad news is... you are in step 3! The step where the vision dies and no matter



how hard you work you come up short.  
BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS... there is a step  
4!

God is about to resurrect the vision and  
bring it to pass!

They write a letter that reaches Xerxes  
father, Darius. They remind him of the  
promise given by the previous king,  
Cyrus.. Darius, in Ezra 6 declares that the  
royal treasury should pay for the temple  
materials. He declares that the  
opposition, the rulers of the surrounding  
areas stay away; that no one should stand  
in the way of the temple being built.

God did this! God resurrected the vision.  
The very Kingdom which ordered the  
standstill of the project is now paying for

the project and defending Israel from their enemies.

## **face your opposition first**

You must face your opposition first

What are you struggling with today?

What is standing in your way, keeping you from seeing the vision God gave you come to pass? Do you have in your hands a dead dream? Are you holding a dead vision that once seemed possible, but now it seems impossible?

I fell in love in 2007 with a girl sitting outside the Taco Diner in Plano Tx. She was wearing pink shoes. I came up to her and said something really smooth and charming... who can remember what was said...?

Seriously though... I said... “Wow, those are some pink shoes...” anything to strike up a conversation.

Upon getting to know this girl... I received a vision.. I wanted to marry her... I want to spend the rest of my life with her... I want us to have a family together... It became apparent that she felt the same, as well... BUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM... a big problem... She had severe epilepsy and grand mal seizures.

She told me she would spend most of her life not being able to drive a car and would rely on expensive medications that leave her feeling not like herself. She leveled with me and told me that the doctors said she could never have children.

The vision we had... was dead. Nothing we could do about it. As much as I loved this girl I could not fix her problem, I could not heal her.

You receive the vision.

You work the vision.

The vision dies.

But then one night when I was out of town attending a church conference.. Sarah came to a prayer meeting. While she was at the prayer meeting she fell to the floor in a grand mal seizure. The people of the church... this church... Redemption Church gathered around Sarah Frazier and started to pray.

She has been healed ever since that moment in 2007. She has never had another seizure. We have had 3 beautiful boys. She drives herself to work every day. She takes no medication. She has been medically cleared.

It seemed impossible! But IF God gives the vision, you better know He can resurrect the vision. He does what we never could do.

## **What do you need God to do for you?**

I know you are facing opposition... but you need to know what the Bible says...

Isaiah 54:17 no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.(NIV)

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.(NIV)

## MUSICIAN

Receive a vision.

Hand what is dead over to God.

Face your opposition in this altar.