

**There's something different
about these people**



Another time ... another place

A classical painting depicting a chaotic battle scene. In the foreground, soldiers on horseback are engaged in combat, with some falling and others on the ground. A large crowd of people, including men, women, and children, is gathered around the scene, some appearing to be in distress or mourning. In the background, a city with a prominent tower or castle is visible on a hillside, surrounded by trees and a hazy sky. The overall tone is dramatic and somber.

- Bizarre world – Same God
- Ezra tells of a people who were different
- And faced resistance because of it
- Step back for a minute ... God's big story



Israel become the same as those around them

Why build ... a temple?

- 6th Century
 - Jewish nation return from slavery
- Along comes Ezra & Nehemiah
- **EVERYTHING** is destroyed, & they say ... “Let’s build a temple!”
- ... What for?



A painting of a grand, golden temple with columns and a crowd of people in the foreground. The temple has a prominent portico with several tall, fluted columns. The scene is set in a bright, sunny environment with a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a group of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered, some looking towards the temple. The overall style is reminiscent of classical or biblical art.

Not about restoring a listed building

- It was about the presence of God
- Through the OT God has a “dwelling place”
- Downside – led to a mechanical view of God and forgiveness ...
- Question:
Where is God today?

Opposition to the rebuilding – Ezra 4, 1-7

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, 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.’*

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.’*

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. 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.

At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. 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 ...

Step thru the story

- Opposition is from Samaritans ...
& gave rise to a tradition

It went something like this:

- *“...We like your God too! ...*

You should become like us”

- *“... But Cyrus told US
to build the temple”*

- *“... Let’s write a letter” ...*

And everything comes to a halt?

What did the Samaritans dislike so much?

**15 years of
Discouragement
Rejection
Taunts
Bribes
...**

1. There's something different about these people
2. They have one God & they honour him
3. If we oppose them, they get on with God's work anyway



A high-angle, long-exposure photograph of a busy transit hub. The scene is dominated by a wide staircase with metal railings, where many people are captured in motion, appearing as blurred streaks. To the right, an escalator is also visible. The ground is a light-colored, polished floor with dark geometric patterns. In the background, there are signs for 'London Travel Information' and 'Merchant' (with 'Frederick & K...'). A red 'West' sign is also visible. The overall atmosphere is one of constant activity and movement.

**What does opposition
look like today?**

Because we're not building a temple...

Opposition is from Outside

Secularism

- Apathy – God is irrelevant
- Materialism
- “What’s a Bible?”

Post 9-11 New Atheism

- Everything has naturalistic causes and “Religion poisons everything”
- Christianity main target
- God of Scientism

*“You should
become like us”*

& Opposition is from inside

Sneaks up - we never turn away but

- Samaritan like: we set up our God alongside ... career, latest pursuit ... children ...
- A hard heartedness and a desire to be the same as those around us
- Comes through the back door

Risk: We absorb our culture until we are indistinguishable from it





**Disciples – part of society yet
separate from it**

Opposition today is as much choices we
make as the people who oppose us

People should be able to look at us ...

***“There’s something different
about these people”***

Integral part of our society
....and yet separate from it

A hand holds a magnifying glass over a cracked, dry landscape. The lens shows a vibrant green field under a blue sky with white clouds, contrasting with the parched ground outside.

Lets draw this together

Looking back at the
Old Testament ...
through Jesus

Seeing the OT through Jesus

- Something about the nation of Israel NOW
- Their thinking affirmed by Jesus

1. There's something different about these people
2. They have one God & they honour him
3. If we oppose them, they get on with God's work anyway



A SUMMARY

Israel at a crossroads – *“you should become like us”* – EASY!

1. Peace in Christ & trouble in this world coincide
 2. Opposition both outside and inside
 3. Called to be part of society yet separate from it
- Do people look at you ...
“there’s something different about them?”

“Oh God, make me more like Joe”

From Everything You've Heard is Wrong, Tony Campolo

