

I. Opposition of the Samaritans

1.. Reason for the opposition

The reason for the opposition of the Samaritans is that the Jews refused to accept their offer to help build the temple (4:2,3). The reason the Jews gave for refusing to accept their offer was that Cyrus had commanded them to build the temple (4:3), but the real reason was probably that they were a mixed race (4:2 -Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, had brought Gentiles to ^{control} Palestine where Samaria was located, to intermarry with the Jews) and their religion was a mixture of truth and error (2 Kings 17:33 -The Samaritans worshipped Jehovah, but not exclusively - they also worshipped their own gods).

2. Description of the opposition

- a. They did everything they could to prevent the Jews from building the temple (4:4)
- b. They paid officials to make unfavorable reports at the King's court respecting the people of Judah (4:5)
- c. They wrote a letter to Ahasuerus, i.e., Cambyses, King of Persia- 529-522 B.C. - in which they made an accusation against the Jews (4:6)
- d. The Samaritan officials wrote a letter to Artaxerxes, i.e. Gomates or Pseudo -Smerdis, King of Persia- 522 B.C. - in which they accused the Jews of being a rebellious people (4:12) and informed the king that if he allowed the Jews to build the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, they would rebel against him, and, not only would he lose the tax revenue he was currently receiving from them (4:13) but he would also lose his hold on the territory west of the Euphrates River (4:16). They then urged the King to search the records of his fathers so he could see that the Jews were a rebellious people and pointed out that it was because the Jews were a rebellious people that they were destroyed (4:14,15). In response to this letter, Artaxerxes, i.e. Gomates or Pseudo-Smerdis wrote the Samaritan officials a letter in which he told them that their letter had been read to him (4:17,18) and that he had commanded that the records of his fathers be searched and had found that the Jews were a rebellious and seditious people (e.g. Jehoiakim - 2 Kings 24:1; Jehoichin - 2 Kings 24:9,10; and Zedekiah - 2 Kings 24:20). He said that it had also been found that the Jews have had mighty Kings who ruled over all the countries west of the Euphrates River and that tribute was paid to them (4:19,20). He then told the Samaritan officials to command the Jews to stop their work on the temple and the walls until they received another commandment from him, and to do it promptly so that no damage would come to him from his western frontier. (4:21,22).

3. Result of the opposition

The Samaritan officials forced the Jews to stop their work on the temple and walls (4:23,24).