

CALLING IT QUILTS

“Faithful to Fulfill: A Study of God as Revealed in Post-Exilic Scripture”
Ezra 4:1-24 / Part 5 / Pastor Matthew Jones

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Drama Comes (Ezra 4:1-2)

Decision and Commandments (Ezra 4:3)

Discouragement and Coercion (Ezra 4:4-5)

Defamation and Cancelation (Ezra 4:6-24)

Slandering the Remnant (6-13)

Searching the Record (14-20)

Stopping the Rebuild (21-24)

Decree and Calling (Ezra 4:1-24)

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Reflective Questions for You and Your Small Group

1. This week in our study of Ezra 4 we saw the people of Israel were under heavy discouragement brought on by slanderous people who managed to get God's people to throw in the towel and quit rebuilding the Temple at the very beginning of the post-exilic era. In your own personal life, has discouragement or opposition from others ever brought you to the place where you had to quit something you otherwise would have wanted to finish? Share.

2. Building on the last question, what is your biggest 'throw-in-the-towel' regret in life over not finishing something or giving up on someone when maybe you shouldn't have and could have pressed on? Share. What did you learn through the process? How did God sustain you through the regret and journey?

3. In Ezra 3-4, God's people are beginning the work of rebuilding the foundations for corporate worship. For us as a church, we are entering our own time of rebuilding as the physical quarantines from the pandemic have begun to lift. This is a critical time for us to seek joy, walk humbly, serve others, and passionately pray for God to be with us. Over the course of quarantine, people have died in our community, a good number have moved out of the area and others have transitioned to other churches, along with a few placed under church discipline for active sin, while some are still anxious about returning and need our body to be active in reaching out. All of this said, discuss what practical things you can do (personally, not via programs) to be the church caring for the church, encouraging her to overpower any discouragement we could have from this crazy year. How do we fight for joy and fan into flame a fire for praising our holy and loving God?

4. In Ezra 4:1-24, the people of Israel are slandered and canceled by enemies. In the chapter, we don't see Israel responding with a tit-for-tat approach. They take the higher ground and let their enemies attack them. It is reminiscent of our Savior Jesus, who suffered in silence before His enemies' defamation (see Luke 23:9, Acts 8:32, Isa.53:7). Discuss the role of silence when dealing with conflict and drama; how does God use it to sanctify us and vindicate us from attacks?

5. In Ezra 4, the enemies of Israel are making a narrative against the people and calling for a search of things (people, written accounts, historic records, etc.) to find examples that fit the narrative they had spun. Discuss how this tactic works today in our culture to divide and demonize people. Without getting too partisan, think about how the Rights says X about the Left, and the Left says Y about the Right, and how it feeds the cancel culture of our day. Similarly, discuss current affairs that have divided people like the pandemic, elections, protests, etc. How does the church get sucked into this in unhealthy ways and how does it distract us from our mission in reaching the lost with the gospel and loving each other?

6. As it relates to our mission, how have you personally let the madness of 2020-21 get you off mission and rob your joy? What is God teaching you? Share and pray.