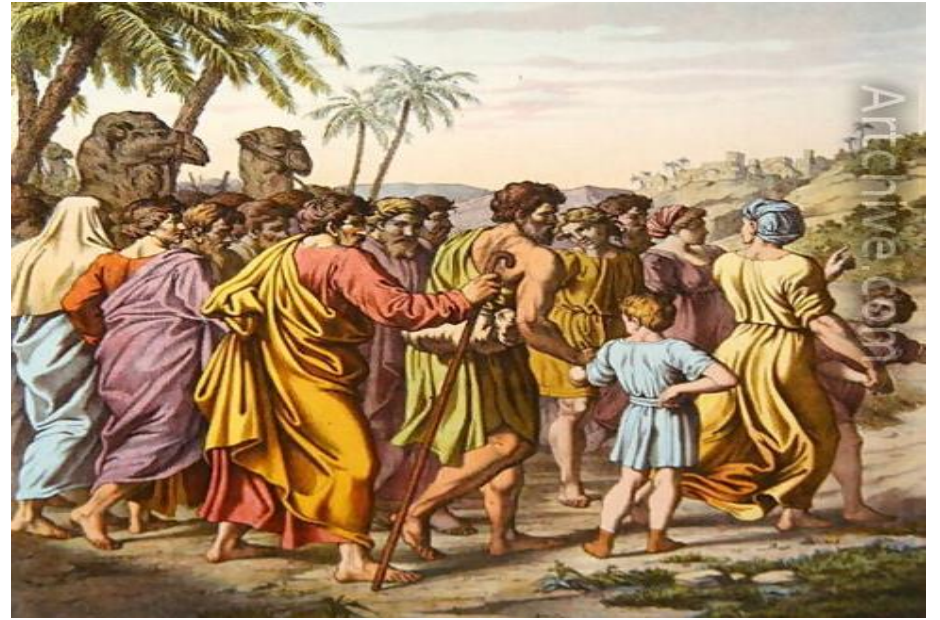


Ezra: Working together in God's service



Class 3: Don't give up
with things go wrong!



Warning: the responses of Ezra 3
may have led to the tests of Ezra 4

Younger: Shouted & praised (excited!)

Older: Wept (disappointed) 😞

Hag 2:3-4 *Is it not in your sight as nothing?*

Zech 4:8-10 *Who has despised the day of
small things?*

God custom makes our trials to
fine-tune our spiritual lives

The Trouble Begins!

Ezra 4:1-3

Now when **the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin** heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, ² they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "**Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.**" ³ But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "**You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.**"

The Leaders take a firm stand!

The Adversaries Challenge!

- **Adversaries (v.1):** Samaritans – Introduced as adversaries from the start!
- **Let us build with you:** the Jews could sure use the help!
- **Days of Esarhaddon** (son of Sennacherib) about 130 years ago!
- **We worship God:** but idols too! (2Kgs 17:24-33, 39-41)
- **Assyrians moved Jews out of North & brought in Gentiles**
 - Gentiles brought their idols & mixed in with Jews in the North part of Israel
 - Samaritans feared Yahweh & all their other gods too



No compromise for Zerubbabel & Joshua

Background to the Samaritans

2 Kings 17:28-41

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and **taught them how they should fear the LORD.**

29 However **every nation continued to make gods of its own**, and put them in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt. 30 The men of Babylon made **Succoth Benoth**, the men of Cuth made **Nergal**, the men of Hamath made **Ashima**, 31 and the Avites made **Nibhaz and Tartak**; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to **Adrammelech** and **Anammelech**, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32 So **they feared the LORD**, and from every class **they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places.** *more....*

The were adversaries from the start and never really intended to help the Jews

Background to the Samaritans

2 Kings 17:28-41

33 *They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods-- according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.* 34 *To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD,* nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, 40 However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals.

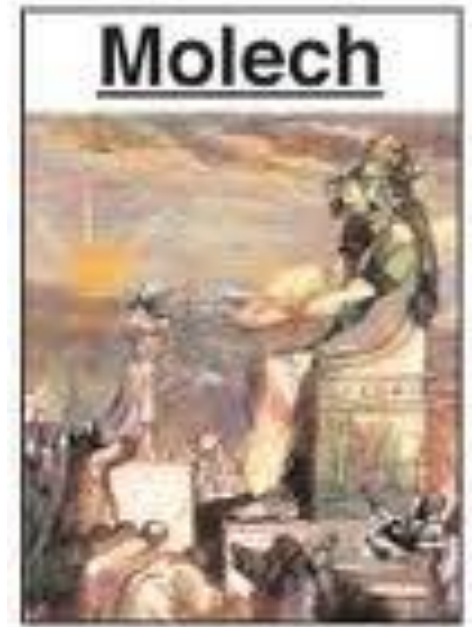
41 *So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images;* also their children and their children's children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.

The were adversaries from the start and never really intended to help the Jews



Test #1: Return to Idols? (vs 2-3)

**Idol worship was a primary
cause of the 70-year captivity**

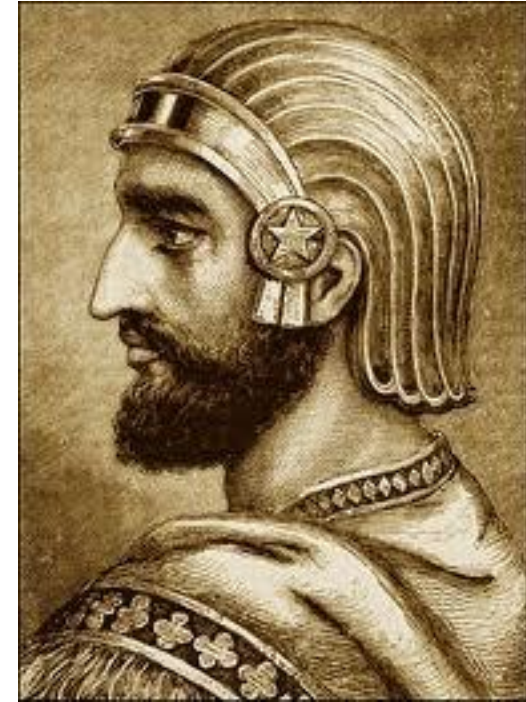


- Were the people willing to separate from the nations, stand fast for Yahweh their God, and guard the Truth that was entrusted to them?



Yes! At least for now

Joshua & Zerubbabel's Defense and the Samaritans' response



- **As Cyrus commanded (v.3):**
 - Cyrus told “those that go up to Jerusalem” to rebuild the temple
 - So those already in the land not involved
- **People of the land discouraged the Jews (v.4)**
 - Decision not to compromise led to immediate trouble
 - Some of the Jews became discouraged

Many of our decisions to not compromise with this world will cost us too. Faith & trust in God carry us forward!

Compromising Alliances with the World are Destructive



Lot: *Political* (Gen 19:1)

Sat in the gate at Sodom

Judah: *Business/economic* (Gen 38)

Friends with Hirah the Adullamite

Jehoshaphat: *Marriage* (2 Chr 18:1) Married his son (Jehoram) to Ahab's daughter (Athaliah)

Political/Military (2 Chr 18:3) war with Ahab against Syria

Economic (2 Chr 20:35) ships with Ahaziah at Ezion Geber

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. (2 Chr 19:2)

**We cannot compromise in building our
CYC's, Sunday Schools, and witnessing!**

People in Heb 11 who made tough decisions by Faith for long term results

- **Noah:** Built an ark and suffered abuse for it
- **Abraham:** Willing to offer up Isaac
Left Ur to go to an unknown land, that was having a famine when he got there!
Let Lot have first choice of the land
- **Moses:** Demanded Pharaoh let Jews go, even though Pharaoh made life even harder for Jews
- **Rahab:** Risked her life to hide the spies

Some long-range spiritual decisions have immediate uncomfortable results - That's when we need faith!

A few years later this problem arose

Ezra 9:9-12

9 For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, 11 which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, '**The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity.** 12 **Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity,** that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.'

God warned them about the pagans in the land

The frustration builds!

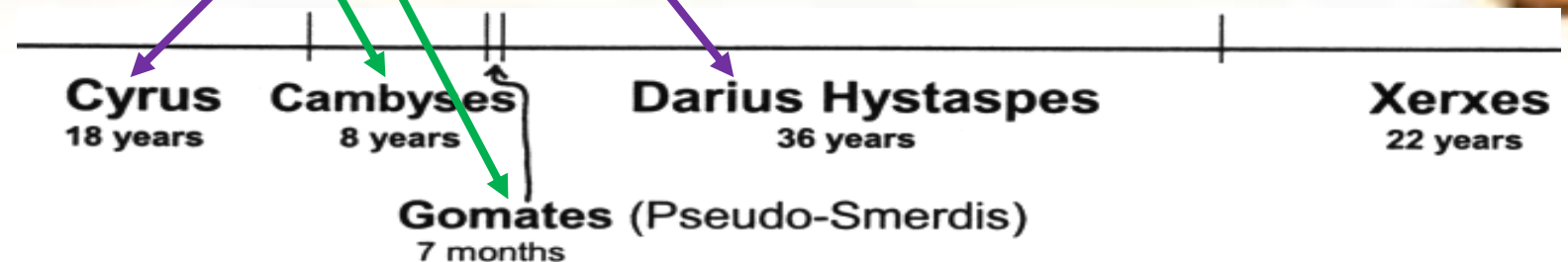
Ezra 4:4-7

4 Then the **people of the land** tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose *all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.* [the whole timespan of the trouble]

6 *In the reign of Ahasuerus* [a title. Another in Dan 9:1 and in Esther],, in the beginning of his reign, **they wrote an accusation** against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 *In the days of Artaxerxes* [a title. Another in Ezra 7 and Nehemiah] also, **Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes** king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.

Who were these Kings?



The Kings of Ezra 4

Effect on Temple	Name in Ezra 4	Historical Name	Length of Reign
Issued decree to build temple	Cyrus	Cyrus the Great	9 years after decree
Did not hinder the work	Ahaseurus	Cambyzes II	8 years
Stopped work on temple	Artaxerxes	Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)	7 months
Encouraged work to finish	Darius	Darius Hystaspes (Darius the Great)	36 years

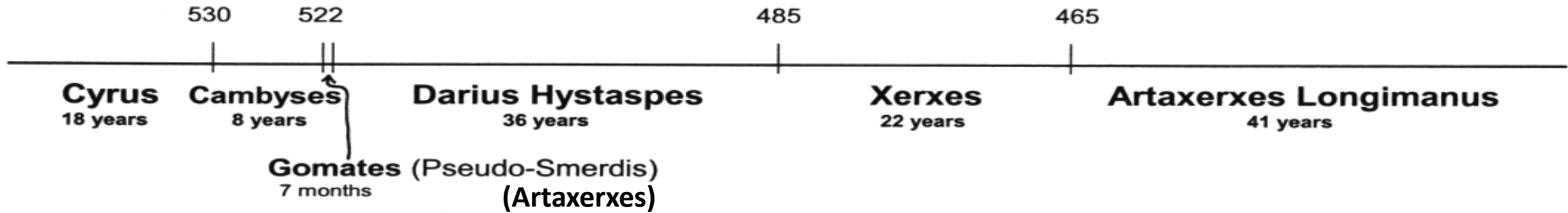
Diverging Expositions among Christadelphians

Past expositors think Ezra 4
continues to Nehemiah building the
walls in the reign of Artaxerxes
Longimanus 60 years later

Recent expositors think Ezra 4
only deals with the temple
building period



Persian Kings: Cyrus to Longimanus



- Some take Ahasuerus (v.6) to be Xerxes & Artaxerxes to be Longimanus (58 years after Darius Hystaspes) and apply it to the building of the walls in Nehemiah's time
- but v.24 shows this is about the temple, not walls.
- If Ezra returned in the days of Longimanus, he would be ancient! (over 130 years old)

**So Ahasuerus is Cambyses
& Artaxerxes is Gomates**

Ezra 4:23-24 Shows that entire chapter is about the Temple – not the wall building in Nehemiah

23 Now when the copy of *King Artaxerxes' letter* was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and *by force of arms made them cease.*

24 Thus *the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased*, and *it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

Nothing in Ezra 4 is about Nehemiah's walls

Ezra 4 is all about the temple, not the walls

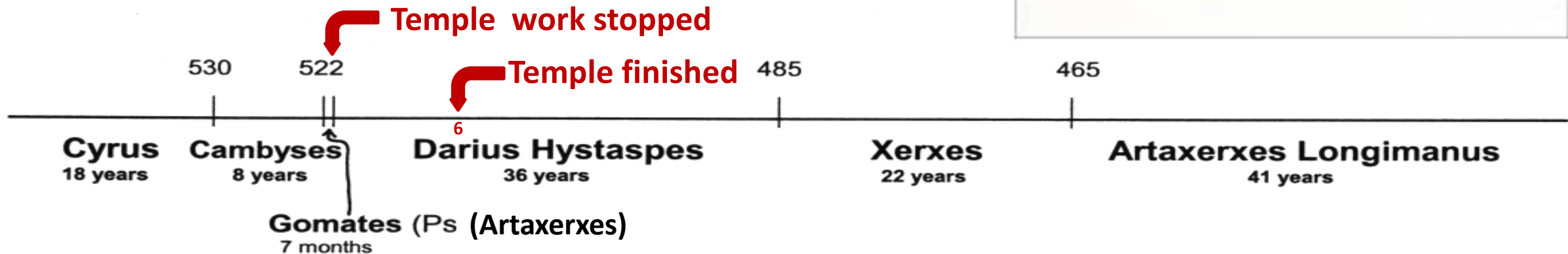
Ezra 4:5-7, 23-24

- 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose *all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*
- 6 *In the reign of Ahasuerus*, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.
- 7 *In the days of Artaxerxes* also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.
- 23 Now when the copy of *King Artaxerxes' letter* was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.
- 24 *Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

Artaxerxes in v.7 is the same king in v. 23

The Key!

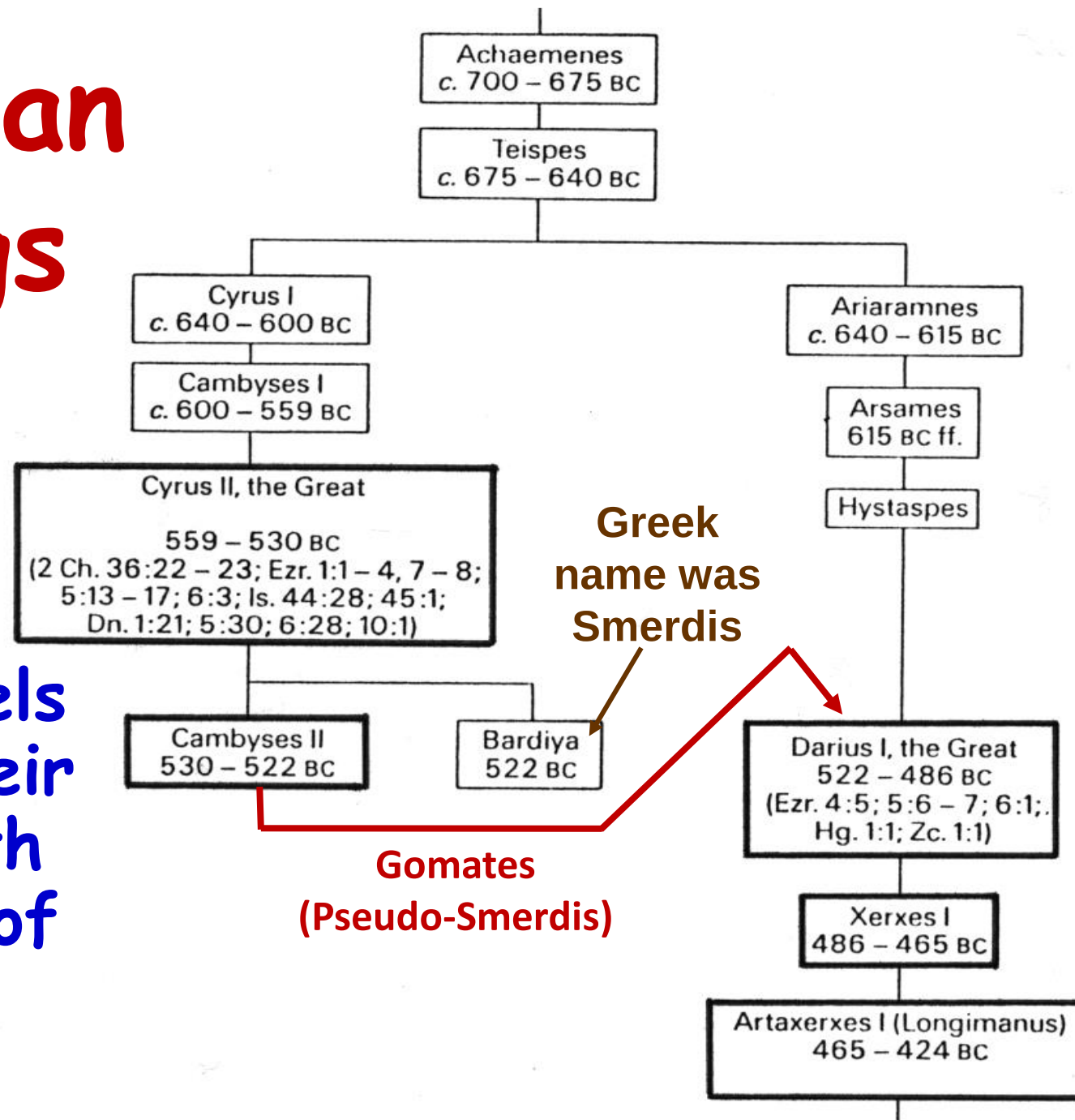
- The temple work is stopped in the reign of Artaxerxes of verse 7 (see v.23-23)
- The temple is finished in the 6th year of the reign of Darius (6:15)



So all the kings in Ezra 4 influenced the building of the temple

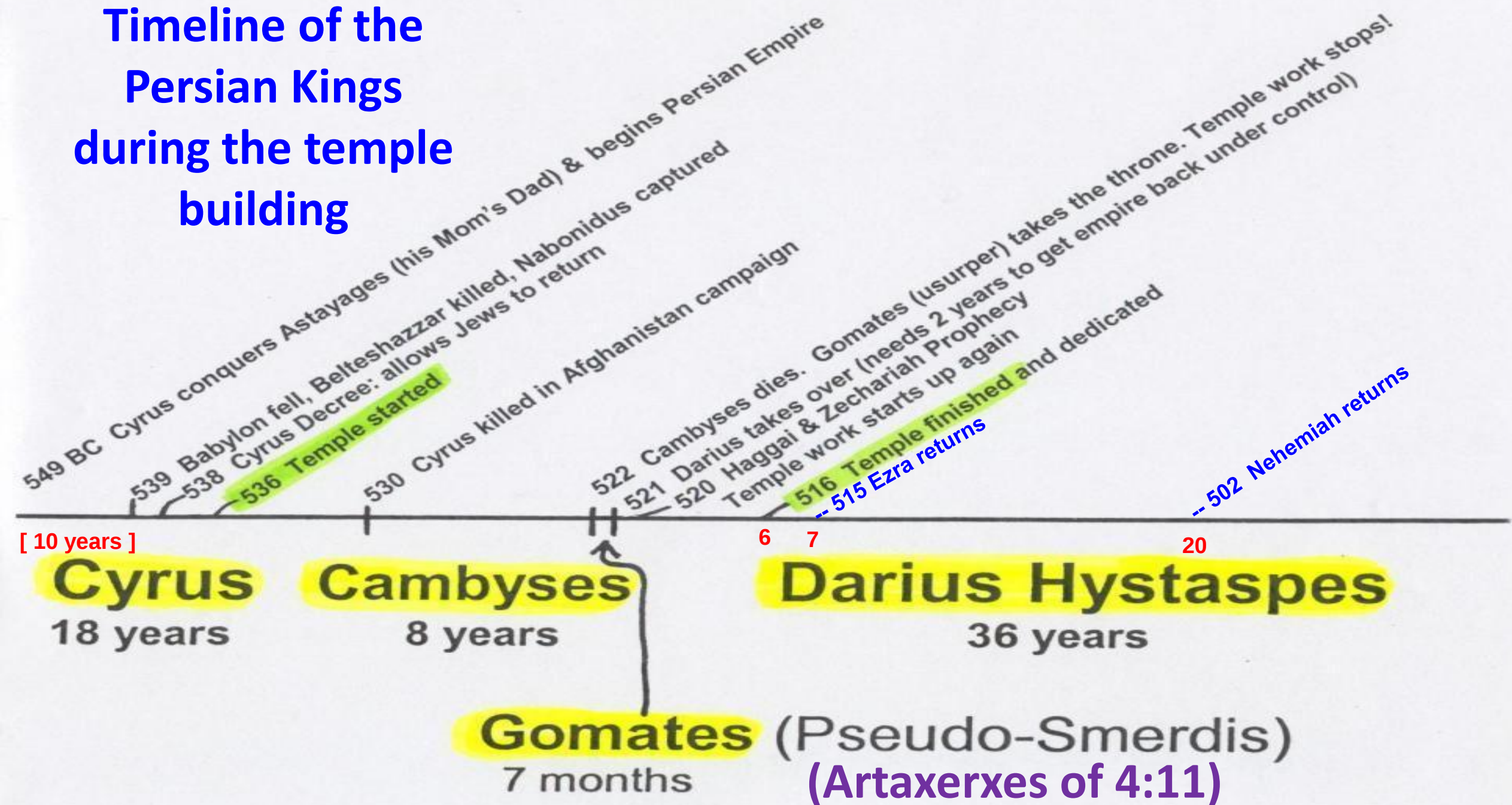
Persian Kings

The Angels ended their work with the line of Cyrus



They began working with Darius Hystaspes

Timeline of the Persian Kings during the temple building



The Adversaries Expand

Ezra 4:8-10

8 **Rehum** the commander and **Shimshai** the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion:

9 From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and **the rest of their companions** — representatives of the **Dinaites**, the **Apharsathchites**, the **Tarpelites**, the **people of Persia** and **Erech** and **Babylon** and **Shushan**, the **Dehavites**, the **Elamites**, 10 and **the rest of the nations** whom the great and noble **Osnapper (Ashurbanipal)** took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and the remainder beyond the River — and so forth.

A huge group united against the Jews

The Intimidating Letter of Lies!

Ezra 4:11-16

11 (This is a copy of the letter that they sent him) **To King Artaxerxes** from your servants, the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth:

12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and **are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.** 13 Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, **they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.** 14 Now because we receive support from the palace, **it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor;** therefore we have sent and informed the king, **15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.**

16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, **the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.**

They pressured the imposter King

The Samaritans' Letter

- **Artaxerxes (v.7)** = Gomates
- **V.10** check a modern version
- **Rebellious & evil city (v.12):** trying to make Jerusalem look bad for the Persians
 - v.15 “harmful to kings” & “incited sedition”
- **Rebuilding the walls:** a lie! Misleading.
- **Search (v.15):** about Jerusalem (not Cyrus' decree)
 - These people are not interested in Truth!

Artaxerxes' Answer: Stop the work by force!

- **Mighty kings (v.20):** David, Solomon
 - Menahem (2Kgs 15:16)
 - Josiah (2 Chron 34:6,7; 35:18)



**Remember:
God is in
Control!**

LIES OF THE SAMARITANS

- 1) Jews are rebuilding the city and finishing the walls (v.12) *[no mention of temple]*
- 2) Jews will not pay taxes, tribute (v. 13)
- 3) Jerusalem is rebellious, harmful to kings, incited sedition - that's the reason it was destroyed (v.15)
- 4) if city is finished, Persia will lose its dominion this side of Euphrates (v.16)



God used this to stop the work

Test #2: Pressure & Endurance (vs 4-5)

- Were the people ready to endure tribulation from without?
- Were the people ready to endure trouble for many years and **continue steadfast** in their devotion to building God's house during times of distress & disappointment when their faith was challenged?



No!

Artaxerxes sends an answer

Ezra 4:17-24

17 **The king sent an answer:** To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River: Peace, and so forth.

18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me. 19 And I gave the command, and a search has been made, **and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it.** 20 There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them. **21 Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.** 22 Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings?

23 Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, **they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease.** 24 **Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.**

Remember: God stopped the Work!

God gives them what they wanted

- **By force and power (v.23):**

- When we complain about life God sometimes gives us what we really want
- Makes us re-think our situation
- Don't complain about your family, ecclesia or job!

- **The work stopped:**

- Only for about 2 years
- True believers were probably frustrated
- It was a time to test their Faith: do we really believe God is in control and using these events to save His people?



Have your
cake & eat
it too!

This is when faith gets you through!

Why did God stop the work?

- **15 years of work** had worn out and discouraged the people
- **Older people didn't like** the new temple
- **Adversaries hired counselors** against them
- **Workers wanted to spend time** on their own houses, farms and businesses
- **People were afraid** of adversaries (8:4-5)



Now was the time for faithful believers to step forward and stir up the community to finish God's house

A close-up photograph showing a circular arrangement of approximately ten hands of various skin tones (light, medium, and dark brown) interlocking and supporting each other. The hands are positioned in a ring, with fingers and palms visible, creating a sense of collective strength and unity. The background is a plain, light color.

**Discouraged and
uninvolved members can
lead to a lack of unity**

A circular arrangement of hands of various skin tones, symbolizing unity and teamwork. The hands are stacked in a circle, with fingers pointing towards the center. The skin tones range from light to dark, representing diversity. The background is plain white.

**Lack of unity can lead
to discouraged and
uninvolved members**

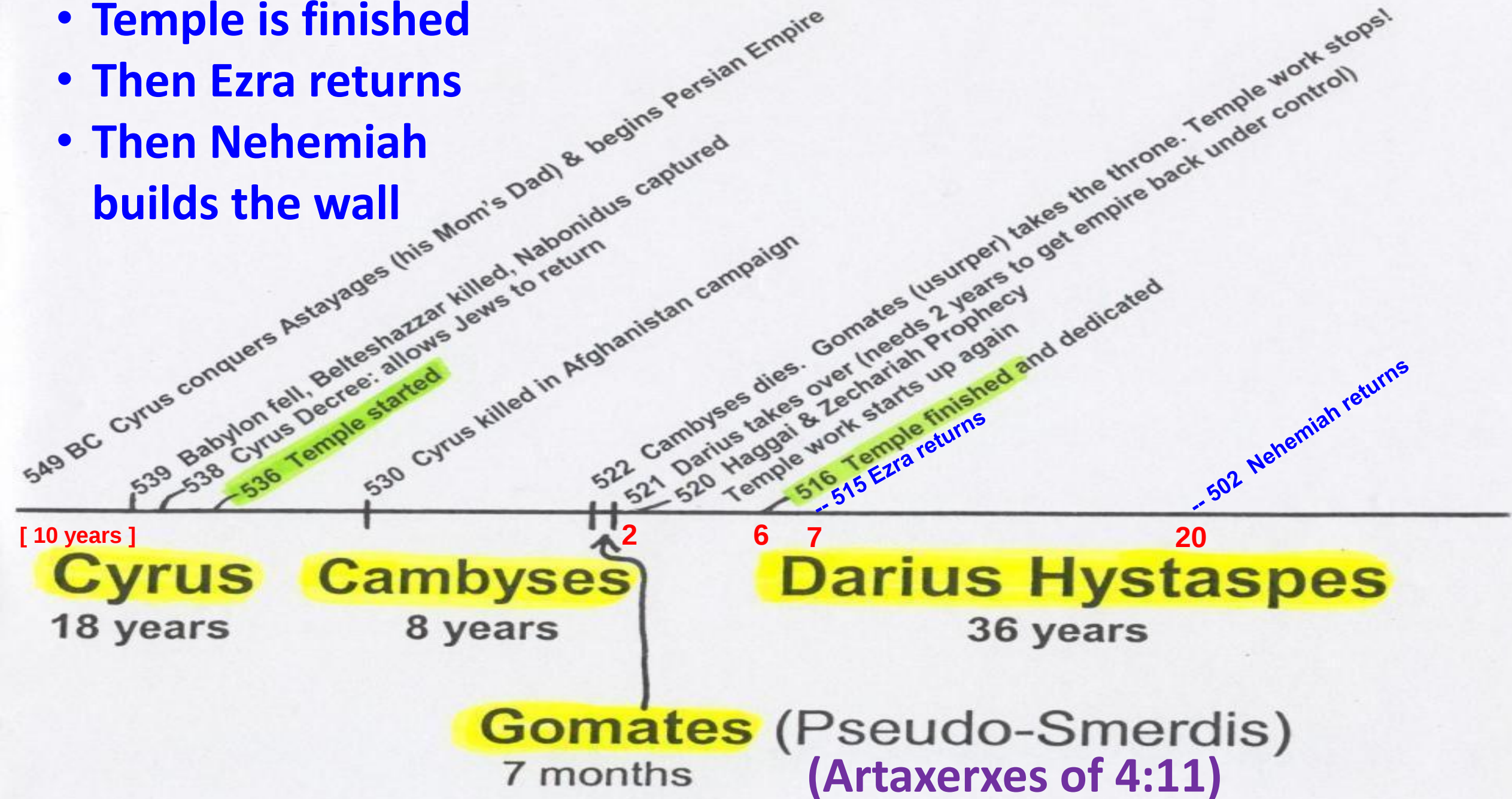
God Revives the Work

Ezra 5:1-2

Then the **prophet Haggai and Zechariah** the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel and **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak **rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.**

God will get the job done!

- Temple is finished
- Then Ezra returns
- Then Nehemiah builds the wall



God gets the work going again!

- Used Haggai & Zechariah
- **Similar to today:** no angel visits, no spirit gifts
- **People needed faith** to see what God & His angels were doing for them behind the scenes
- **Only took 4 more years to finish**

It's amazing what can be accomplished in families & ecclesias when we have the faith to get involved in God's work!



“The Prophets of God Helping them”

(Ezra 5:1-2)

Coordinated efforts of Haggai & Zechariah

Haggai: Exhorts and reprimands the people for their poor choices and lack of faith.

Zechariah: Encourages the people that the angels are working behind the scenes and they will help finish the temple!

What had the People been doing the last 15 years? (see Haggai 1:1-6)



- 1) Claimed the time was not right (v. 2)
not yet the end of the 70 years
- 2) Paneled their own homes (v. 4)
- 3) Tried to improve their economic situation (v. 6)

When we aren't involved in God's work, we tend to serve ourselves

Haggai's Motivational Message

Haggai 1:1-6

In the **second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month**, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: '**This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."**'"

3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "**Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"** 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "**Consider your ways!**"

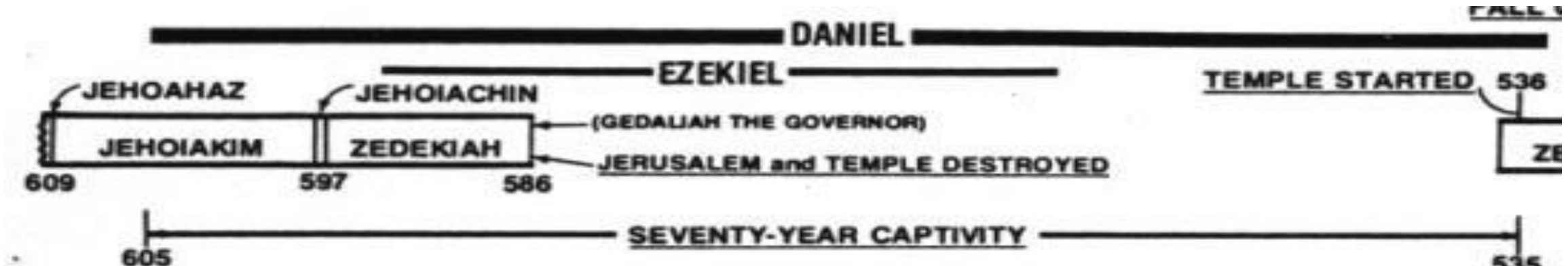
6 "You have **sown much**, and bring in little; **You eat**, but do not have enough; **You drink**, but you are not filled with drink; **You clothe yourselves**, but no one is warm; And **he who earns wages**, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Most people used the excuse "it's the wrong time!" and turned to improving their lives

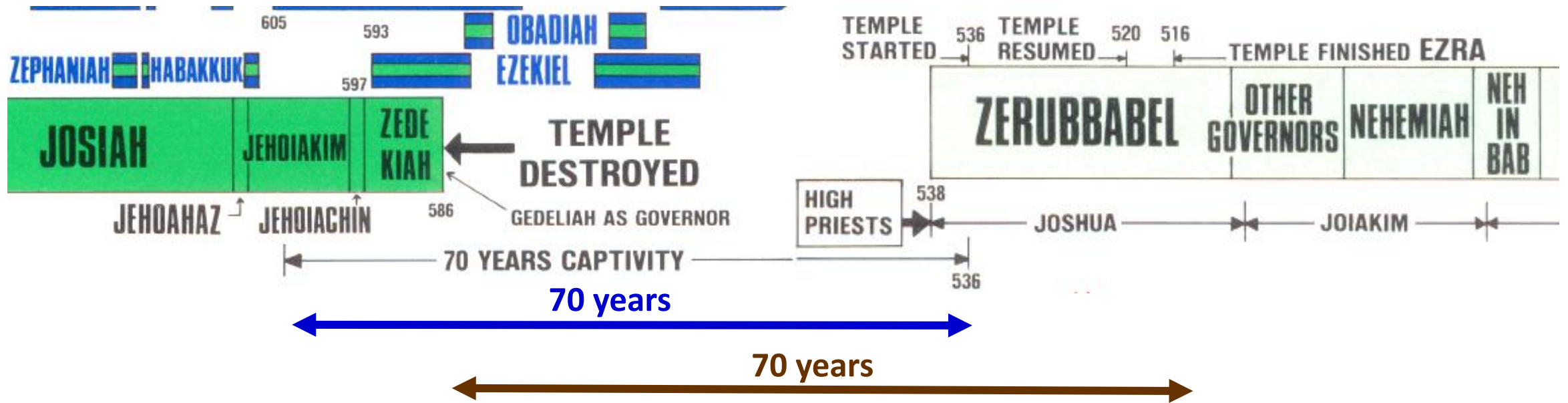
Jeremiah's Prophecies about the 70 years

Jer 25:11-14 *(during early years of Jehoiakim's reign)* after 70 years God will punish Babylon

Jer 29:10-14 *(during early years of Zedekiah)* after 70 years God will bring the Jews back and give them a future with peace and hope



When did the 70 years start?



People justified what they really wanted to do!

Warning for today: Don't wait till the end to get involved! God expects us to be working consistently until the end.

God tried to talk to the people by influencing the conditions in the land (Hag 1:5)



- 1) Small harvests: blight, mildew & hail (2:17)
- 2) Droughts
- 3) Cold
- 4) Inflation



God talked to them
through economic &
environmental
events

We need to examine our own lives
and consider how we have fared

Haggai's Message: Consider how you have fared!

God had influenced their lives



1:6 Small harvest, not enough to eat or drink, cold temperatures, high inflation

1:11; 2:17 drought, blight, mildew on crops

1:9 God blew it away!

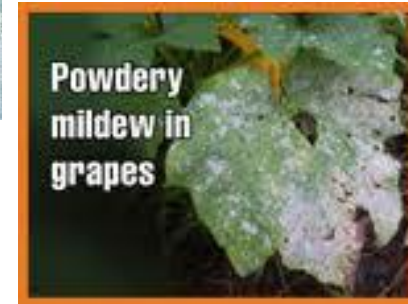
1:8 Solution: Get involved in building temple!

1:13 God's assurance: "I am with you".



He stirred up the spirit of the people

1:14 Response: they came and worked



2:1-9 Don't worry that this temple is not as good as the former. It's latter glory will be greater

2:10-14 Nation is unclean. Much easier to learn wickedness than righteousness

2:15-23 God will bless Israel from now on because they involved again in God's work of building

Get priorities right: Spiritual issues first!



God talks to us through the experiences of life

- **We need to meditate and consider** the events of our lives – they are not by chance!
- **God attempts to influence us through life events** – if we are listening
- **He uses economics, jobs, health, family troubles, accidents, friends**

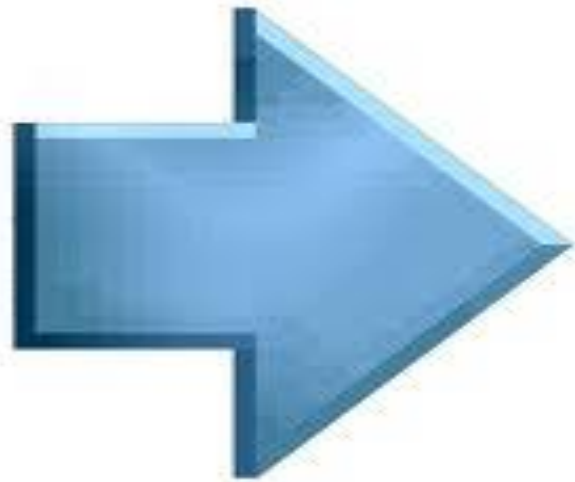


**We need to meditate
& consider how we have fared!
God's talking...are we listening?**

Lessons from This Class

- There are times when we need to draw a line and refuse compromising alliances with unbelievers in Spiritual activities with us.
- Drawing a line may lead to trouble, but God may be testing us and growing our faith.
- Endurance through tribulation is a tough test, but essential for our spiritual development.
- God may give us what we really want, so make sure we seek His Kingdom more than anything.

Next



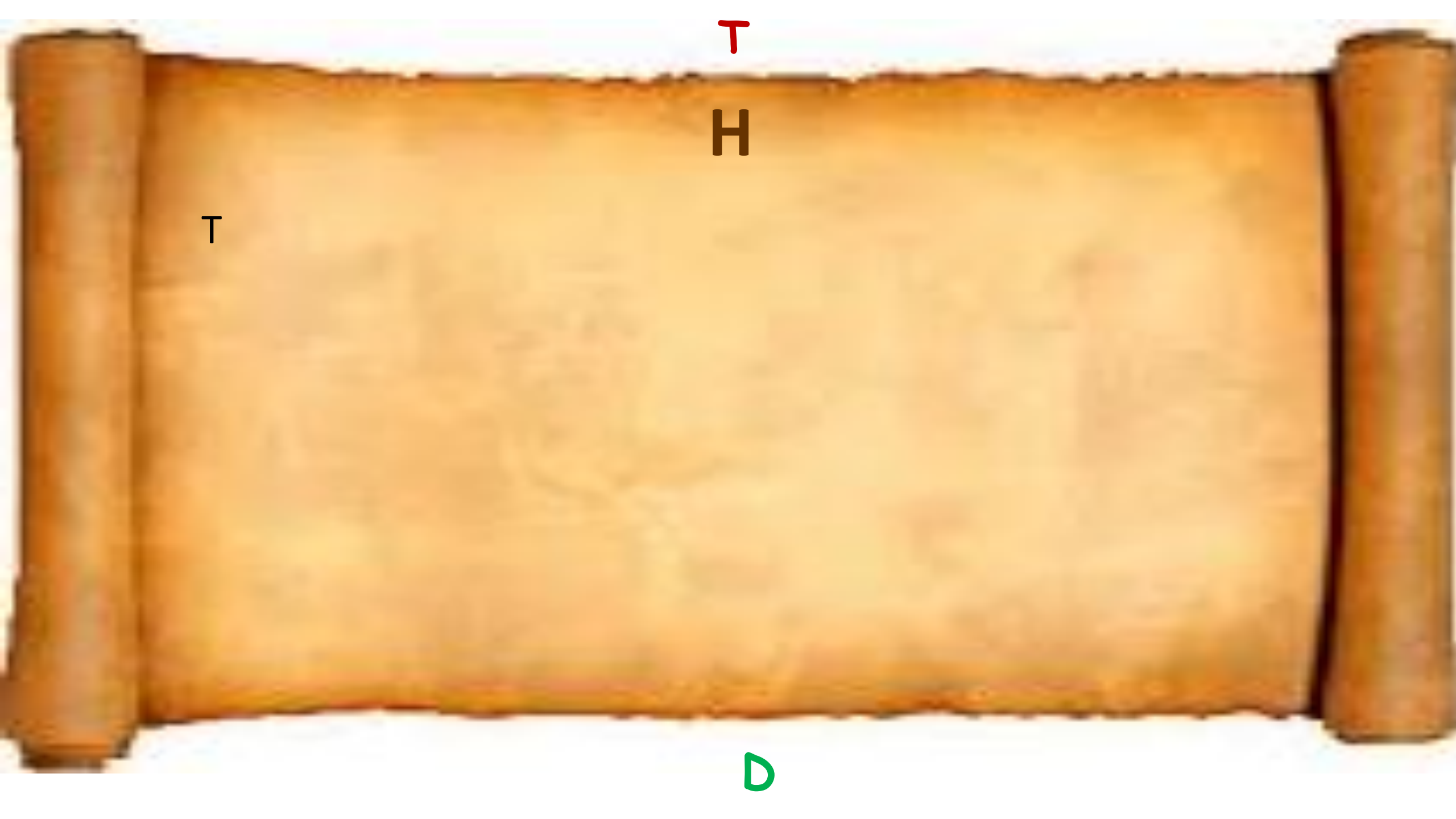
Class 4: God will Provide the Motivation to Finish!



W

• D

G

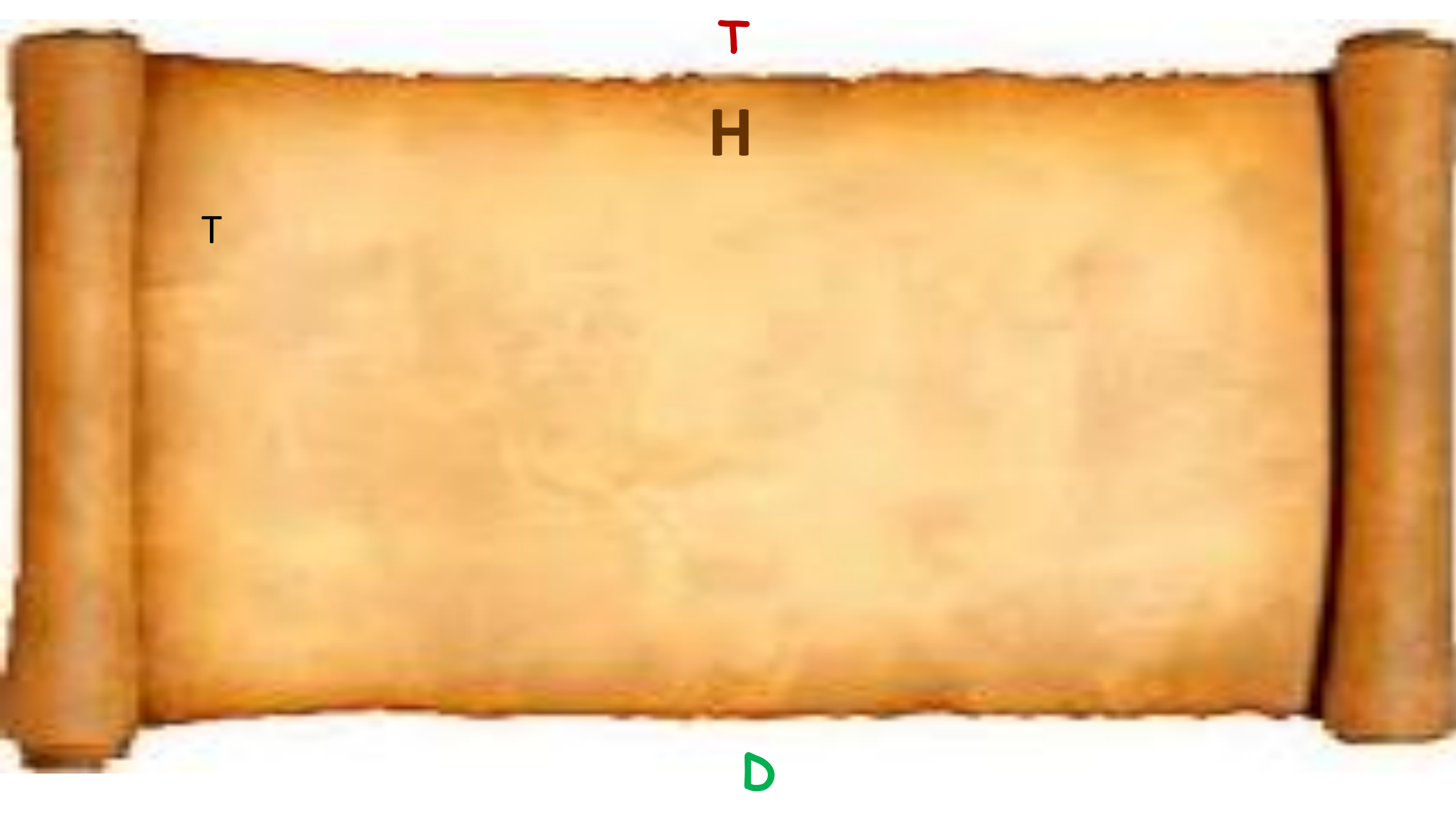


T

H

T

D



T

H

T

D

Lessons from This Class

- God

