



2019 4 Ezra and Nehemiah: Lesson 4 Facing Opposition

by Wendell Moses

Preamble: A text without the context is a pretext.

Feb 27, 2017 - Ben Witherington III, one of my favourite New Testament scholars, states “A text without a context is just a pretext for what we want it to mean...”

The full quote, which Dr. Carson ascribes to his father, a Canadian minister, was
"A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text." A "proof text" was originally a neutral term for the scriptural text that proved (or was seen to prove) a particular doctrine.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote:

“The heretics were never dishonest men; they were mistaken men. They should not be thought of as men who were deliberately setting out to go wrong and to teach something that is wrong; they have been some of the most sincere men that the Church has ever known. What was the matter with them? Their trouble was this: they evolved a theory and they were rather pleased with it; then they went back with this theory to the Bible, and they seemed to find it everywhere.”

Famous Quotes about Opposition:

“I do not know what to think of my friends, they think opposition is so negative.”

“Opposition: Are you for it or against it.”

“Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.” — Albert Einstein

“When people try to bury you, remind yourself you are a seed.” — Matshona Dhliwayo

“It is true that we live in the world, but we do not fight from worldly motives. The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons but God's powerful weapons, which we use to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments; we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ.”
2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (GNT)

Memory Text:

“But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.” Ezra 5:5 (NKJV)



Opposition

Real

Open

Passive - Aggressive

Imagined

Infighting

Directional Incongruence

Someone or something is taking an organization / entity in a different direction than desired or designed.

Inactivity of team members

Ever try to haul something heavier than yourself?

“Walking in mud”

Opposition in the Bible

Christ

Moses & Pharaoh

Joseph

at home

in Egypt

Potiphar’s wife

In Jail

Paul opposed Peter Galatians 2:11 -14

SABBATH

Read first paragraph

Read third paragraph: “Resistance to the work of God is . . .” This describes opposition to building of the second Jewish temple.

Was building of the temple necessary?

Could Christ’s mission have been possible without a physical temple for worship to occur?

Was the first temple (tent sanctuary) necessary for worship of the Children of Israel to occur?

Humans crave a physical entity to worship and focus their attentions to God. Throughout history, mankind has had a predilection to revere certain places, things, relics, unusual objects and unusual people.

Mayan temple artifacts:

- created clubfoot deformities.
- All aspects of the temple said something about God and the reality of the universe.
 - Most aspects of the sanctuary service pointed directly to Christ.



What was the purpose of building the temple and the restoring the wall of Jerusalem?

- It provided a focus for worship
- It helped to purify the **worship** of the true God
- It prepared the **hearts** of the builders.

In 2019 - Do we have a temple at the present time?

Do people believe that the current temple can be purified?

Is there current opposition to purification / restoration of the current temple?

Jesus Studied Natural Train of Thought—The beneficent operations of nature are not accomplished by abrupt and startling interpositions; men are not permitted to take her work into their own hands. God works through the calm, regular operation of His appointed laws. So it is in spiritual things. Satan is constantly seeking to produce effects by rude and violent thrusts; but Jesus found access to minds by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He disturbed as little as possible their accustomed train of thought, by abrupt actions or prescribed rules. He honored man with His confidence, and thus placed him on his honor. He introduced old truths in a new and precious light. Thus, when only twelve years old, He astonished the doctors of the law by His questions in the temple. {Ev 139.5}

What would have happened if Christ fed the disciples vegeburgers and fruit salad on the beach instead of fish)? What would the take home message have been?

What is the take home message people have when they come to an Adventist potluck?

SUNDAY

Opposition Begins

Ezra 4:1 - 5 - refusal to let the neighbors help build the temple

- Who were these people?
 - 2 Kings 17:24 - 41
- Who / what did they worship?
- What was their status in times of Christ?
 - Why?
 - Who told them (the Jews) to do what they were doing?
 - Do we (as Seventh-day Adventists Christians) have anything equivalent today?
 - A people group that we blame for many ills.
 - A movement or organization that is characterized by negative descriptives.
 - A group or organization that is described as apostatizing, that has combined worship of God with pagan practices, different worship practices from our own?



“Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together? How can Christ and the Devil agree? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God!” 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (GNT)

How did Christ treat the Samaritan people?

Traveling and came to a Samaritan village that wouldn't accept him due to his destination.

- Went to another village
- Sent his disciples to preach two by two, but not to the Samaritan villages.
- The Good Samaritan
- The ten lepers
- Woman at the Samaritan village well

Jesus assumed humanity, that He might meet humanity. He brings men under the transforming power of truth by meeting them where they are. He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their nature and interest is complete. The truth came from His lips beautiful in its simplicity, yet clothed with dignity and power. What a teacher was our Lord Jesus Christ! How tenderly did He treat every honest enquirer after truth, that He might gain admission to the sympathies, and find a home in the heart.—Manuscript 44, 1894. {Ev 140.1}

MONDAY

Prophets Encourage

Read the first paragraph...Why did the Jews who had returned to Palestine stop working on the temple

How do you know that you are doing what you are supposed to be doing?

- Loma Linda University Merger
 - 1967 - voted to merge two campuses
 - 1990 - voted to separate La Sierra & Loma Linda campuses programs.
- White Memorial move

“At that time two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo, began to speak in the name of the God of Israel to the Jews who lived in Judah and Jerusalem. When Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak heard their messages, they began to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and the two prophets helped them.” Ezra 4:24 - 5:2 (GNT)

Read the 3rd paragraph: “The Jews had stopped building . . .” I am intrigued by the statement: “Human opposition doesn't stop God”

If nothing stops God, why should I be worried or stressed by fulfilling God's word / instructions to



me?

Is it possible to slow the “work of God”?

Is it possible to cause a delay in His coming?

“Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, as you wait for the Day of God and **do your best to make it come soon—the** Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home.” 2 Peter 3:11-13 (GNT)

Who loses if I stop cooperating with God? What was Haggai’s message?

Haggai 1 (GNT with Deuterocanon):

During the second year that Darius was emperor of Persia, on the first day of the sixth month, the Lord spoke through the prophet Haggai. The message was for the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and for the High Priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak.

The Lord Almighty said to Haggai, "These people say that this is not the right time to rebuild the Temple." The Lord then gave this message to the people through the prophet Haggai: "My people, why should you be living in well-built houses while my Temple lies in ruins? Don't you see what is happening to you? You have planted much grain, but have harvested very little. You have food to eat, but not enough to make you full. You have wine to drink, but not enough to get drunk on! You have clothing, but not enough to keep you warm. And workers cannot earn enough to live on. Can't you see why this has happened? Now go up into the hills, get lumber, and rebuild the Temple; then I will be pleased and will be worshiped as I should be.

"You hoped for large harvests, but they turned out to be small. And when you brought the harvest home, I blew it away. Why did I do that? Because my Temple lies in ruins while every one of you is busy working on your own house. That is why there is no rain and nothing can grow. I have brought drought on the land—on its hills, grainfields, vineyards, and olive orchards—on every crop the ground produces, on people and animals, on everything you try to grow."

The People Obey the Lord's Command

Then Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people who had returned from the exile in Babylonia, did what the Lord their God told them to do. They were afraid and obeyed the prophet Haggai, the Lord's messenger. Then Haggai gave the Lord's message to the people: "I will be with you—that is my promise." The Lord inspired everyone to work on the Temple: Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah; Joshua, the High Priest, and all the people who had returned from the exile.



They began working on the Temple of the Lord Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was emperor.

TUESDAY

Work Stoppage

Read 3rd paragraph: “It is apparent that . . .” Were they supposed to keep working when the federal government showed up with an army to stop them?

Are we to question our understandings when issues arise that make it difficult to accomplish something we think we are to be doing?

The enemies of the Jews wrote letters

Read the letter to Emperor Artaxerxes: Ezra 4:11 – 16. Read the 2nd paragraph and the 3rd paragraph

Was what was in the letters correct?

Was this reason to stop work on the temple?

When Satan presents your faults and failings to you, is he telling the truth?

- Only part of the truth
 - He is telling the truth about your failings and faults
 - He is not telling the truth that you are actually a victor in Christ Jesus and that it is useful to try to follow Christ.
 - What words do you have in your head?
 - What do you hear over and over?

Bible Word Study: Read Biblical Passages on Victory

- John 16:31 - 33
- Romans 8:31 - 39
- 1 Corinthians 15:56 - 58
- **2 Corinthians 2:14**
- Philippians 1:27 - 30
- 2 Timothy 4:6 - 8
- 1 John 5:1 - 5
- Revelation 2:25 - 28
- Revelation 3:5
- Revelation 15:2 - 4
- Revelation 21:6, 7



WEDNESDAY

Nehemiah Takes Action (444 B.C.)

Read Nehemiah 4:16, 17, 18, 21, 23 Why was Nehemiah having to work so hard? Wasn't he doing God's work?

It looks like he was having to strategize and plan an awful lot.

“Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths smooth.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (GW)

The angel told me to give Zerubbabel this message from the Lord: "You will succeed, not by military might or by your own strength, but by my spirit. Obstacles as great as mountains will disappear before you. You will rebuild the Temple, and as you put the last stone in place, the people will shout, 'Beautiful, beautiful!'" Zechariah 4:6-7 (GNT with Deuterocanon) “

“To conclude: you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another, and be kind and humble with one another. Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing; instead, pay back with a blessing, because a blessing is what God promised to give you when he called you. As the scripture says, "If you want to enjoy life and wish to see good times, you must keep from speaking evil and stop telling lies. You must turn away from evil and do good; you must strive for peace with all your heart. For the Lord watches over the righteous and listens to their prayers; but he opposes those who do evil." Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you should suffer for doing what is right, how happy you are! Do not be afraid of anyone, and do not worry. But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will become ashamed of what they say. 1 Peter 3:8 - 16 (GNT)

Read the question section at the bottom of the page.

“The Lord says, “I will instruct you. I will teach you the way that you should go. I will advise you as my eyes watch over you.” Psalms 32:8 (GW)

“Don't be stubborn like a horse or mule. They need a bit and bridle in their mouth to restrain them, or they will not come near you.” Psalms 32:9 (GW)

Integrative, Evidence-based approach

- Scripture
- Science
- Experience

It wasn't until the priests carrying the ark got their feet wet that the River Jordan stopped and allowed



the Children of Israel to pass over in flood stage.

Lets play “Pretend”:

- How would you have felt if you were one of the priests.
- You probably couldn’t swim
- The river was flowing over its banks.

THURSDAY

Doing a “Great Work” (Nehemiah 6)

How Missionary Service May Be Restricted—In sending missionaries to distant countries, those men should be selected who know how to economize, who have not large families, and who, realizing the shortness of time and the great work to be accomplished, will not fill their hands and houses with children, but will keep themselves as free as possible from everything that will divert their minds from their one great work. The wife, if devoted and left free to do so, can, by standing by the side of her husband, accomplish as much as he. God has blessed woman with talents to be used to His glory in bringing many sons and daughters to God; but many who might be efficient laborers are kept at home to care for their little ones. {AH 165.3}

“Train,” Not “Tell”—To parents is committed the great work of educating and training their children for the future, immortal life. Many fathers and mothers seem to think that if they feed and clothe their little ones, and educate them according to the standard of the world, they have done their duty. They are too much occupied with business or pleasure to make the education of their children the study of their lives. They do not seek to train them so that they will employ their talents for the honor of their Redeemer. Solomon did not say, “Tell a child the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” But, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”²⁴ {CG 38.2}

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” [Proverbs 9:10.] The great work of life is character-building; and a knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education. To impart this knowledge, and to mould the character in harmony with it, should be the object of the teacher’s work. The law of God is a reflection of his character. Hence the psalmist says, “All thy commandments are righteousness;” [Psalm 119:172.] and “through thy precepts I get understanding.” [Psalm 119:104.] God has revealed himself to us in his word and in the works of creation. Through the volume of inspiration and the book of nature, we are to obtain a knowledge of God. {CE 64.3}

It is not the Lord’s purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth. Men who are not called to the ministry are to be encouraged to labor for the Master according to their several ability. Hundreds of men and women now idle could do acceptable service. By carrying the truth into the homes of their friends and neighbors, they could do a great work for the Master.—Testimonies for the Church 7:21. {ChS 67.2}



The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob's well had no sooner found the Saviour than she brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised a whole city full were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light at once to her countrymen. This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ.—The Ministry of Healing, 102. {ChS 97.2}

There is a great work to be done, and every effort possible must be made to reveal Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour, Christ as the Sin Bearer, Christ as the bright and morning Star; and the Lord will give us favor before the world until our work is done.—Testimonies for the Church 6:20, 21 (1900). {CM 11.3}

“The striking feature of divine operations is the accomplishment of the greatest work that can be done in our world by very simple means. It is God's plan that every part of His government shall depend on every other part, the whole as a wheel within a wheel, working with entire harmony. He moves upon human forces, causing His Spirit to touch invisible cords, and the vibration rings to the extremity of the universe.” {Ms22-1897.18}

As Christ presented these truths to minds, He broke up their accustomed train of thought as little as possible. Nevertheless a new and transforming economy of truth must be woven into their experience. He, therefore, aroused their minds by presenting truth through the agency of their most familiar associations. He used illustrations in His teaching which called into activity their most hallowed recollections and sympathies, that He might reach the inner temple of the soul. Identifying Himself with their interests, He drew His illustrations from the great book of nature, using objects with which they were familiar. The lily of the field, the seed sown by the sower, the springing up of the seed, and the harvesting of the grain, the birds of the air,—all these figures He used from which to present divine truth; for those would remind them of His lessons whenever they should afterward look upon them.—Manuscript 25, 1890, 4-6. (Untitled Ms, n. d.) {1MR 22.2}

FRIDAY

The Builders on the Wall, A Rebuke Against Extortion, Heathen Plots

Read Biblical Passages on Victory

Then his disciples said to him, "Now you are speaking plainly, without using figures of speech. We know now that you know everything; you do not need to have someone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you believe now? The time is coming, and is already here, when all of you will be scattered, each of you to your own home, and I will be left all alone. But I am not really alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you will have peace by being united to me. The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!" John 16:29-33 (GNT with Deuterocanon)



“In view of all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right side of God, pleading with him for us! Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death? As the scripture says, "For your sake we are in danger of death at all times; we are treated like sheep that are going to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-39 (GNT)

Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin gets its power from the Law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! So then, my dear friends, stand firm and steady. Keep busy always in your work for the Lord, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord's service is ever useless. 1 Corinthians 15:56-58 (GNT with Deuterocanon)

“But thanks be to God! For in union with Christ we are always led by God as prisoners in Christ's victory procession. God uses us to make the knowledge about Christ spread everywhere like a sweet fragrance. For we are like a sweet-smelling incense offered by Christ to God, which spreads among those who are being saved and those who are being lost. For those who are being lost, it is a deadly stench that kills; but for those who are being saved, it is a fragrance that brings life. Who, then, is capable for such a task? We are not like so many others, who handle God's message as if it were cheap merchandise; but because God has sent us, we speak with sincerity in his presence, as servants of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 (GNT)

“Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires, so that, whether or not I am able to go and see you, I will hear that you are standing firm with one common purpose and that with only one desire you are fighting together for the faith of the gospel. Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory. For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him, but also by suffering for him. Now you can take part with me in the battle. It is the same battle you saw me fighting in the past, and as you hear, the one I am fighting still.” Philippians 1:27-30 (GNT)

“As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day—and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear.” 2 Timothy 4:6 - 8 2 Timothy 4:6-8 (GNT)



“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah is a child of God; and whoever loves a father loves his child also. This is how we know that we love God’s children: it is by loving God and obeying his commands. For our love for God means that we obey his commands. And his commands are not too hard for us, because every child of God is able to defeat the world. And we win the victory over the world by means of our faith. Who can defeat the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” 1 John 5:1 - 5 1 John 5:1-5 (GNT)

“But until I come, you must hold firmly to what you have. To those who win the victory, who continue to the end to do what I want, I will give the same authority that I received from my Father: I will give them authority over the nations, to rule them with an iron rod and to break them to pieces like clay pots. I will also give them the morning star.” Revelation 2:25-28 (GNT)

“Those who win the victory will be clothed like this in white, and I will not remove their names from the book of the living. In the presence of my Father and of his angels I will declare openly that they belong to me.” Revelation 3:5 Revelation 3:5 (GNT)

“Then I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire. I also saw those who had won the victory over the beast and its image and over the one whose name is represented by a number. They were standing by the sea of glass, holding harps that God had given them and singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

"Lord God Almighty,
how great and wonderful are your deeds!
King of the nations,
how right and true are your ways!
Who will not stand in awe of you, Lord?
Who will refuse to declare your greatness?
You alone are holy.
All the nations will come
and worship you,
because your just actions are seen by all.""

Revelation 15:2-4 (GNT with Deuterocanon)

“Then the one who sits on the throne said, "And now I make all things new!" He also said to me, "Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted." And he said, "It is done! I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end. To anyone who is thirsty I will give the right to drink from the spring of the water of life without paying for it. Those who win the victory will receive this from me: I will be their God, and they will be my children.” Revelation 21:5-7 (GNT)