

Check...Check...Checkmate

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

A. Slide2 *The Drop Box*, an award-winning documentary. [tickets on sale this Sun only]

I. **Intro:**

A. Slide3,4 In a chess game you can many times be placed **in Check** but still come out ahead & even **win the game**.

1. Here we'll see the enemy place them **in check** a couple times...**but** let's see how the game **ends up**.

B. Chapter 4 is a little hard to follow because it doesn't flow exactly *chronologically*.

1. 4:1-5 & 4:24-6:22 flow as one unit, describing the building of the temple from its **beginning** with king **Cyrus** to its **completion** under king **Darius**.

2. So basically 4:6-23 is *inserted* to describe **future hostility** against the returnees, who tried to rebuild **the walls** under king **Xerxes** & **Artaxerxes**.

a) I think **Ezra** wanted us to know that the **hostility** continued afterwards.

II. Slide5 **RESTORATION RESISTANCE (Ch. 4)**

A. When God starts to **bless**; Satan starts to **battle**.

1. Although another way to keep your enemy off your back is to **not do anything for the Lord**; **Live an unaggressive & lazy life**...and guaranteed, the enemy will leave you alone.

2. Every work of the Lord draws the attention of the enemy.

B. Satan has the same tool belt he's been using for ages. Let's look at a few of these ol' tools.

1. Let's look at **the 1st tool** out of **Satan's tool belt**...

C. Slide6a [1] The Tool of **Infiltration** (1-3) Let us build with you

1. This sounds innocent enough, **but** this was a **golden cup of poison**. What's the problem?

a) **2 Kings 17:24** Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, & from Sepharvaim, & placed them in the cities of **Samaria** instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of **Samaria** & dwelt in its cities.

(1) These are **Jews** that had **intermarried** with w/the **Assyrians**, making the 1/2 breed **Samaritans** of the NT.

(2) This is the story of **the Bad Samaritans!**

2. Are there any **partnerships** you're involved with that you should **reevaluate**?

3. Not all **volunteers** have the right motive, they may be working for the **enemy**.
 4. What weapon do we have to fight against **Infiltration**?
 - a) Not being *unequally* yoked. Being careful of partnerships with the world.
- D. **6b [2] The Tool of Discouragement** (4a) ...tried to discourage the people of Judah.
1. Often Discouragement is brought about by **different fears**.
 - a) **Is.12:2** Behold, God is my salvation, **I will trust and not be afraid**; For YAH, the **LORD**, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.
 2. When we yield to discouragement, it is usually because we give too much thought to the **past** or to the **future**.
 - a) **Thomas Edison** said of discouragement, *When down in the mouth remember Jonah - he came out all right.*
 - b) Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light.
 3. What weapon do we have to fight against **Discouragement**?
 - a) **Knowing** what GOD has called us to. **Not worrying** about yesterday or tomorrow, **focusing** on today.
- E. **6c [3] The Tool of Trouble** (4b) They troubled them in building.
1. This can still happen in our building projects, & life situations today...The questions we need to ask ourselves are:
 - a) Is this a **timing** issue? Is God doing something else behind the scene we **can't see yet**?
 2. What weapon do we have to fight against **Trouble**?
 - a) The reminder that **God is bigger than** any troublemaker, any Goliath's, in our lives.
- F. **6d [4] The Tool of Frustration** (5a) ...hired counselors...to frustrate their purpose.
1. Play the role of the **Oyster** that makes something **beautiful** out of its **irritations**.
 2. What weapon do we have to fight against **Frustration**?
 - a) Pray, not anxiety or worry.
- G. **6e [5] The Tool of Fatigue** (5b) ...all the days of Cyrus.
1. Some times **it just doesn't let up**...
 2. *Like the tactic that is used to flush someone out of their house, or using interrogation methods w/continuous music or sounds.*
 - a) Though **not Politically Correct**, what my older brother Mark used to do was a game he referred to as **Chinese water torture**...as he'd pin me down w/his

knees on my shoulders, then tap w/his finger on my chest. *Drip, drip, drip* (saying, *Chinese water torture*).

b) **The tool of fatigue.** I've seen many Christians fall to this weapon, of being so **physically** tired that it subsequently wears on them **emotionally & spiritually**.

3. **What weapon do we have to fight against Fatigue?**

a) Continual physical, emotional, & spiritual refreshment.

H. **6f [6] The Tool of Accusation** (6) they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah & Jerusalem

1. This tool worked...The construction had to **stop**. 4:24

a) We do not live in a **fairy book world** where everyone lives *Happily ever after*.

b) The enemy won this **battle**...**but didn't** win the **war**. (& that's key)

2. Satan has a wonderful **arsenal of accusations** for us; & a whole army to carry out his bidding. **And unfortunately...many Christians** lining up to be used also.

3. **What weapon do we have to fight against accusations** that come our way?

a) Expect it & Evaluate it.

I. **Slide7a Does Satan use these same tools today?**

1. He only has **3 channels** at his disposal to tempt us: *Himself, world system, our flesh*

2. He only has **3 tactics** to tempt us: the *lust of our eyes, lust of our flesh, pride of life*.

3. **What can we do to counter his attacks?**

a) **Submit to God, resist the devil & he will** flee from you. **James 4:7**

b) **Every work** of the Lord *draws* the attention of the enemy.

c) He may win a **few battles** **but** never **the war**.

J. **Slide7b Vs.4:6-16 - The accusatory letter written to Ahasueras/Xerxes.** I'll **read** vs.12-16

1. **The deception?** It's for the kings sake. *We have you in mind dear King*.

K. Vs.4:17-22 - **The kings answer.** You're right (19). Make them stop (21). They stopped em (23,24)

III. **Slide8a RESTORATION RESUMED (Ch. 5)**

A. **Read** 5:1-5 - It seems they really didn't have any right to stop the work to begin with.

B. With this prophetic message, **Zerubbabel & Joshua** commenced the work again.

1. **But** typical, no sooner then when they get back to the work, **opposition was raised again**.

2. This time they **give no heed**.

3. **Why?** Because...**the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews**. 5:5

C. **The enemy had a short-lived triumph**.

D. About **15 years** lapse from the end of ch.4 to 5:1.

1. During that time God prepares 2 prophets to renew & strengthen the work.

E. Slide8b F.B.Meyer, *If God has clearly set us to do a work for him, let us go through w/it in spite of all human opposition.*¹

1. Storms are the methods by which he reveals our weakness & His all-sufficiency.
2. God's plan shall stand, though earth be in arms to resist it.

F. (5:6-17) The letter Tattenai sent to Darius. I'll Read vs.17

IV. Slide9 ROADBLOCK RESOLVED (Ch. 6)

A. Darius' response. I'll Read vs. 1,2. They found it.

B. Slide10a Map – They went looking where? (Babylon). They found it where? (Achmetha, probably *Ecbatana*, the ancient capital of Media)

1. Show how far were they apart. 265 miles as the crow flies.
2. If we were only dealing with *natural* means then they wouldn't have found this...but the eye of their God was upon them.

C. Slide10b (6:8-12) Don't miss this...the difficulty raised by their foes really became their benefit

1. For the king decreed that their needs be supplied & expenses met.
2. The man who would have hindered the progress is now used to help with great gifts.
 - a) This reminds us of whom in Esther? (Moredcai/all the attacks, then backfired on Haman)
3. When you obey God, you at once ensure His cooperation for the accomplishment of the task at hand.

D. (6:13-18) Read 14-16

E. The work began with mingled joy & tears (3:11-13) but it ended with all the people rejoicing (6:16)

1. It is highly probable that this is when Psalm 146-148 were composed.
2. In the Septuagint they are entitled: *The Psalms of: Haggai & Zechariah.*
 - a) See Ps.146:4,9; Ps.147:2,3
3. The joy of worshipping & serving God, is always accompanied by Satan's attempts to spoil it.
 - a) He doesn't know how not to do that. It is the heart, passion & core of his very nature
 - b) However, Satan cannot thwart the plans of God.
 - c) **Dan.4:35** All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the

¹ F.B.Meyer; pg.200

earth. **No one** can restrain His hand Or say to Him, What have You done?

F. **Slide11** (6:19-22) **Passover & The Feast of Unleavened Bread**.

G. This is the 1st Passover since King Josiah's, more than 100 years earlier.

1. **They were made clean** (20) – They **purified themselves**.
2. **They were unified** (21a) - They **ate together**.
3. **Who partook?** (21b) – **All who had separated themselves from the filth/uncleanness of the nations of the land**.
4. **Why?** (22b) – In order to seek the Lord God of Israel.

H. **Slide12 Communion:** point out where communion is set up. **Come & pick up, back up, wait** to be lead by 1 of the designated communion leaders.