

# Ezra 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

## Analysis

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**Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.** The letter's core accusation begins with 'Be it known'—a formal opening for important intelligence. The description of Jews as 'which came up from thee' cleverly makes Jerusalem's rebuilding the king's responsibility, suggesting that his own authorization created the problem. This rhetorical strategy sought to provoke royal action by implying the king's policies had backfired.

The characterization of Jerusalem as 'rebellious and the bad city' (qiryeta maradeta u-bishta) employs inflammatory language designed to alarm. The Aramaic marad means 'rebellious' or 'seditious,' while bish means 'bad' or 'harmful.' These weren't objective descriptions but loaded political accusations. The letter provided no evidence for these claims, relying instead on emotional manipulation and vague historical references.

The claim that Jews 'have set up the walls... and joined the foundations' appears to be either exaggeration or outright falsehood. The walls weren't actually rebuilt until Nehemiah's mission thirteen years later (445 BC). This demonstrates how opponents were willing to lie to advance their agenda. Their strategy combined

partial truths (Jews returned from exile) with fabrications (completed wall construction) to create plausible-sounding accusations.

## Historical Context

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Jerusalem's historical rebellions against Babylon (597-586 BC) provided grain of truth that opponents exploited. The city had indeed revolted, resulting in its destruction. However, this occurred generations earlier under different circumstances. The opponents attempted to make past rebellion predict future behavior, ignoring changed conditions and Persian imperial policy differences from Babylon's approach.

The mention of walls touched a nerve in Persian imperial concerns. Ancient Near Eastern cities derived their defensive capabilities from walls. A walled Jerusalem could potentially withstand imperial forces, making it a security concern. The opponents understood this vulnerability and crafted accusations specifically to exploit it.

Archaeological evidence shows that Jerusalem in this period remained small and poorly defended. The wall construction claims in this letter were fabrications or at best gross exaggerations of minor repairs. Later, when Nehemiah assessed the actual walls (Nehemiah 2:13-15), he found them still in ruins from the Babylonian destruction 140 years earlier.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How do false accusations mixing partial truths with outright lies become especially dangerous and difficult to refute?

2. What does this passage teach about the need for careful investigation before accepting serious accusations?
3. How should believers respond when characterized with inflammatory labels designed to discredit legitimate work?

## Interlinear Text

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מֵן סָלָקוּ דִּי יְהוּדֵי אֲדִי לְמַלְכָּא לְהוּ אֲדִי יַע  
 known Be it unto the king which that the Jews which came up from  
 H3046 H1934 H4430 H1768 H3062 H1768 H5559 H4481

מְרֻדָּתָא אֲקִרְיָתָא לִירוּשָׁלַם אֲתֵּי עַל יְנָא לֹתָּ  
 thee to us are come unto Jerusalem city the rebellious  
 H3890 H5922 H858 H3390 H7149 H4779

וְאֲשִׁי אֲשַׁכֵּל לוֹ וְשׁוּרֵי אֲבָנֵי  
 and the bad building the walls and have set up the foundations  
 H873 H1124 H7792 H3635 H787

וְהִיטָו:  
 thereof and joined  
 H2338

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Chronicles 36:13** (Kingdom): And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

**Ezra 5:3** (Parallel theme): At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

**Ezra 5:9** (Parallel theme): Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

