

Ezra 4:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

Analysis

That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. The opponents appeal to historical records, suggesting verification would confirm their accusations. Ancient Near Eastern empires maintained extensive archives documenting subject peoples' histories, treaties, rebellions, and tax records. The 'book of the records of thy fathers' refers to royal archives inherited from previous rulers, including Babylonian records acquired when Persia conquered Babylon.

The phrase 'rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces' characterizes Jerusalem as chronically dangerous. The Aramaic *mared* ('moved sedition') intensifies the accusation beyond mere occasional rebellion to habitual insurrection. The claim 'of old time' suggests long-standing pattern rather than isolated incidents. By portraying Jerusalem as inherently rebellious, opponents argued its restoration inevitably threatened Persian interests.

The reference to the city's destruction—'for which cause was this city destroyed'—

alluded to Nebuchadnezzar's demolition of Jerusalem in 586 BC. This historical fact gave credibility to opponents' narrative: Jerusalem had indeed been destroyed for rebellion. However, this selective history ignored crucial context: God had ordained that destruction as judgment on covenant unfaithfulness, and God had now ordained restoration. The opponents understood political history but missed theological reality.

Historical Context

Jerusalem had indeed rebelled against Babylon multiple times. King Jehoiakim initially submitted to Nebuchadnezzar but rebelled (2 Kings 24:1). Later, Zedekiah broke his oath to Babylon, provoking the final siege and destruction (2 Kings 24-25, Jeremiah 52). These rebellions resulted in deportations and eventually Jerusalem's complete destruction. Persian archives would have contained Babylonian records documenting these events.

However, the opponents' historical summary was selective. They ignored that Cyrus himself had authorized the return and temple rebuilding (Ezra 1:1-4). They also ignored that the destruction occurred under completely different circumstances—Judah was then an independent kingdom rebelling against foreign rule, while the current community consisted of exiles voluntarily returning under Persian authority with imperial permission.

Ancient empires did maintain extensive archives. The Persians inherited comprehensive Babylonian records when they conquered Babylon. Archaeological discoveries of administrative tablets from various ancient Near Eastern sites confirm sophisticated record-keeping. The opponents' confidence that archival research would support their claims suggests these records did document Jerusalem's rebellious past, even though this history didn't support their current accusations' relevance.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does selective historical memory distort truth by emphasizing some facts while ignoring crucial context?
2. What does this appeal to archives teach about the importance of accurate historical record-keeping?
3. How should believers respond when opponents cite real historical problems while ignoring God's redemptive purposes?

Interlinear Text

דִּי י	יִבְקֹר	בְּסֵפֶּר	דְּכִרְנֵיָא	דִּי י	אָבִהֶתָּהּ
H1768	That search	in the book	of the records	H1768	of thy fathers
	H1240	H5609	H1799		H2
	ו תִּהְיֶשְׁכַּח	בְּסֵפֶּר	דְּכִרְנֵיָא	וּתְנִידַע	קְרִיתָּהּ א דִּי
	so shalt thou find	in the book	of the records	and know	H1768 city
	H7912	H5609	H1799	H3046	H7149
	דִּי הָ	קְרִיתָּהּ א	מְרִידָא	וּמְהִינְזָקָתָא	מַלְכִין ו יִמְדֵּן
	cause was this	city	is a rebellious	and hurtful	unto kings and provinces
	H1791	H7149	H4779	H5142	H4430 H4083
	וּאֶשְׁתַּדּוּר	עָבְדוּ יִן	בְּגוּהָ	מִן	יּוֹמָתָא א עֲלֵמָא
	sedition	and that they have moved	the same	within	time of old
	H849	H5648	H1459	H4481	H3118 H5957
	ל ע ה	קְרִיתָּהּ א	דִּי הָ	הִסְרִיבְתָּ:	
	for which	city	cause was this	destroyed	
	H5922	H1836	H7149	H1791	H2718

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 4:12 (Kingdom): 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.

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