

Ezra 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

Analysis

We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river. This verse concludes the opponents' letter with a dramatic prediction of total imperial loss in the Trans-Euphrates region. The phrase 'we certify' (yada'in, יָדַעְנָא) means 'we make known' or 'we inform,' lending official weight to their forecast. The claim that the king would 'have no portion' (chelek, חֵלֶק) in the entire province represents extreme exaggeration—suggesting Jerusalem's reconstruction would cause complete regional independence.

This apocalyptic prediction aimed to trigger imperial paranoia. By portraying local construction as inevitable catalyst for empire-wide rebellion, opponents transformed a minor matter into existential crisis. The rhetorical escalation from tax concerns (v.13) to economic damage (v.13) to complete territorial loss (v.16) demonstrates sophisticated propaganda techniques. Each claim built on the previous, creating narrative momentum toward predetermined conclusion: Jerusalem must be stopped.

Theologically, this illustrates how Satan's accusations often employ escalating rhetoric and catastrophic predictions to provoke disproportionate responses. The opponents weren't merely reporting facts but constructing a narrative designed to manipulate the king's decision. Similarly, opposition to God's work today often

employs fear-mongering and worst-case scenarios to prevent kingdom advancement.

Historical Context

The claim that Jerusalem's reconstruction would cost Persia the entire Trans-Euphrates province was absurd. Judah was tiny, weak, and surrounded by peoples loyal to Persia. The returnees numbered tens of thousands at most in a province containing millions. Their economic and military significance was minimal. Yet the opponents gambled that Artaxerxes, ruling from distant Susa, lacked detailed knowledge of Palestinian realities and would accept their characterization.

This strategy proved partially successful. Artaxerxes did order construction halted (v.21-23), though he didn't take more severe action. The king's response suggests he took the accusations seriously while maintaining some skepticism—he stopped the work but didn't punish the Jews or revoke Cyrus's original decree. The opponents achieved tactical victory without complete success.

The mention of 'this side the river' emphasized regional scope. The Trans-Euphrates satrapy included Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Palestine—wealthy, strategic territories. Losing this region would indeed devastate the empire. By connecting Jerusalem to this larger concern, opponents skillfully elevated a local matter to imperial crisis.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do escalating accusations and catastrophic predictions manipulate decision-makers today?

2. What discernment is needed to distinguish between legitimate warnings and manipulative fear-mongering?
3. How should believers respond when opponents portray modest kingdom work as existential threats?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| מְהוֹדֵעַ יִן | אֲנִי חֲנָה | לְמֶלֶךְ א | דָּ י | הָ ה | קִרְיָתָ א | דָּר | תִּתְּבֵן א |
| certify | We | the king | H1768 | that if | city | this | be builded |
| H3046 | H586 | H4430 | | H2006 | H7149 | H1791 | H1124 |
| וְשׁוּבֵי הָ | וְיִשְׁתַּכְּלֵל וְ | לְקֶבֶד ל | דָּנָ ה | חֶלֶק | בְּעֵבֶר | | |
| again and the walls | thereof set up | means | by this | portion | on this side | | |
| H7792 | H3635 | H6903 | H1836 | H2508 | H5675 | | |
| נָהָר א | לֹ א | אֵיתִי י | לָרָ: | | | | |
| the river | no | thou shalt have | H0 | | | | |
| H5103 | H3809 | H383 | | | | | |

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