

Ezra 5:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

Analysis

The officials' questions sought to establish authorization: "Who commanded you to build this house?" The Aramaic *sam teem* (gave command/decree) indicates they sought official documentation—a royal decree authorizing construction. Persian law required such authorization for significant building projects, especially those involving fortifications or temples that could serve as centers of political resistance.

The question "to make up these walls" may refer either to the temple walls or potentially Jerusalem's city walls, which would raise greater security concerns. The officials' inquiry was legally appropriate—they needed to verify that this substantial construction project had proper imperial authorization. Their investigation, though initially threatening, would ultimately vindicate the Jewish community.

Historical Context

Building authorization was a serious matter in the Persian Empire. The Elephantine papyri document Jewish colonists requesting permission to rebuild their temple in Egypt, showing that such authorization was routinely required. Unauthorized construction could be interpreted as rebellion, particularly in the politically volatile early years of Darius's reign when numerous provinces had revolted against Persian authority.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How should believers respond when authorities demand accountability for kingdom work—with fear or with confident transparency?
2. What does proper authorization for ministry look like in a church context, and why is accountability important?

Interlinear Text

לה מ אָמַר רְנָא אֲזִיל שָׁא לְנָא אֶל גַּם כִּי מָא וְאֶתְּנָא
Then asked elders we those unto them thus and said H0

וְאִשְׁרָנָא לְמַבְנֵי הַדָּן הַבַּיִת אֶלְכָם שְׁמָן מִן
Who commanded H0 H2942 house these you to build walls H846

לְשַׁכְלָלָה: דָנָה
these and to make up H1836 H3635