

Ezra 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

Analysis

Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. King Darius I (522-486 BC) ordered archival research to verify Cyrus's original decree, demonstrating Persian administrative sophistication. The phrase 'house of the rolls' (bêth siphraya', בית ספרא, Aramaic) refers to the imperial archives where official documents were stored on scrolls or clay tablets.

The location 'where the treasures were laid up' indicates archives were housed with royal treasures, emphasizing their value and security. This detail reveals bureaucratic organization—important decrees weren't casually discarded but systematically preserved. The verb 'search was made' (bâqar, investigative searching) shows Darius took the inquiry seriously rather than dismissing it politically.

Theologically, this demonstrates God's providence in preserving documentary evidence of His purposes. The seemingly mundane details of Persian record-keeping served divine plans for temple restoration. Darius's integrity in honoring predecessor's decrees shows God can work through legitimate governmental processes and just administration.

Historical Context

Darius I faced significant challenges early in his reign, quelling revolts throughout the empire (recorded in the Behistun Inscription). His establishment of administrative order, including systematic record-keeping, helped stabilize Persian rule. The Persian Empire maintained multiple archive centers at Babylon, Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Susa.

The 'house of the rolls' likely contained thousands of documents on clay tablets and parchment scrolls, requiring trained scribes to locate specific records. Discovery that Cyrus's decree was actually found at Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2), not Babylon, demonstrates the thoroughness of the search across multiple archive sites.

Babylonian opposition to the temple (Ezra 5:3-17) had forced this investigation. Samaritan officials Tattenai and Shethar-bozna'i appealed to Darius, expecting him to halt construction. Instead, Darius's research vindicated the Jews and intensified royal support.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of Persian bureaucracy challenge dichotomies between sacred and secular spheres?
2. What does Darius's integrity in honoring a predecessor's decree teach about governmental justice and continuity?
3. How should believers advocate for their rights within legal-political systems while trusting divine providence?

Interlinear Text

בְּכָתְבָה	יְהִי	מֶלֶךְ	אֶת	דְּרוֹן	וְשָׁם	בְּאֵד	וְלֹא
Then	Darius	the king	made	a decree	and search	was made in the house	
H116	H1868	H4430	H7761	H2942	H1240		H1005
סְפִּרְיָה	בְּבָבֶל:	מִבְּחַת	וְלֹא	תִּפְעַל	הַיְהוּנִית	אֶת	סְפִּרְיָה
of the rolls	H1768	the treasures	were laid up	where	in Babylon		
H5609		H1596	H5182	H8536	H895		

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 5:17 (Kingdom): Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

Proverbs 25:2 (Kingdom): It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

Ezra 4:15 (Kingdom): 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.

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