

Ezra 7:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

Analysis

The letter begins 'Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.' The title 'king of kings' asserts Persian imperial supremacy. Addressing Ezra as 'scribe of the law of the God of heaven' shows royal recognition of his religious authority. The greeting 'perfect peace' (gemar in Aramaic) expresses complete well-being. This pagan king's respectful address to God's servant demonstrates providential favor.

Historical Context

The title 'king of kings' appeared in Persian royal inscriptions (similar to 'great king' or 'king of lands'). It asserted sovereignty over subordinate rulers throughout the empire. Addressing Ezra with this title shows imperial attention to what might seem minor provincial religious matter. The phrase 'God of heaven' was standard Persian theological terminology, though here applied specifically to Yahweh. The shift to Aramaic (vv. 12-26) indicates official document quotation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does a pagan emperor's respectful address to God's servant demonstrate that God controls rulers' attitudes toward His people?
2. What does Artaxerxes' formal recognition of Ezra's religious authority teach about God securing space for faithful ministry?

Interlinear Text

סַפֵּר	כֹּהֵן	לְעֶזְרָא	מֶלֶךְ	מֶלֶךְ	אֵל רִתְחָשׁ סַתָּא
a scribe	the priest	unto Ezra	king	king	Artaxerxes
H5613	H3549	H5831	H4430	H4430	H783
וְכַעֲנָת:	גַּם יֵר	שָׁמַיָא	אֱלֹהֵי	דִּי	דִּתָּא
peace and at such a time	perfect	of heaven	of the God	H1768	of the law
H3706	H1585	H8065	H426		H1882

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 26:7 (Kingdom): For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

Daniel 2:37 (Kingdom): Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

Ezra 4:17 (Kingdom): Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.