

Ezra 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand;

Analysis

Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand. This verse reveals Ezra's royal commission from Artaxerxes I. The phrase **sent of the king** uses Aramaic shelach (שְׁלַח), indicating official ambassadorial status—Ezra traveled as the king's authorized representative, not merely as private pilgrim.

The 'seven counsellors' reflects Persian governmental structure. Daniel 6:7 mentions similar advisory councils. This shows Ezra's mission had empire-level authorization. The purpose—**to enquire** (beqar, בְּקַר, 'to investigate/examine')—gave Ezra authority to inspect conditions in Judah and ensure compliance with both Persian policy and Jewish law.

The crucial phrase **the law of thy God which is in thine hand** identifies Ezra as Torah scholar carrying authoritative Scripture. The Aramaic emphasizes possession—Ezra held God's written revelation and bore responsibility to implement it. This royal decree authorized Torah as governing law for the Jewish community, making divine law civil law. The pagan king enforced God's law.

Historical Context

Artaxerxes I reigned 465-424 BC. His decree came in his seventh year (458 BC), thirteen years before Nehemiah's mission (445 BC). Persian policy granted ethnic-religious communities autonomy under their traditional laws, provided they maintained loyalty to the empire. This explains royal support for Torah implementation.

The reference to 'law... in thine hand' likely indicates Ezra carried a written Torah scroll. Some scholars suggest this was the complete Pentateuch in substantially its current form. Ezra's later public reading (Nehemiah 8) suggests an authoritative, fixed text recognized as binding Scripture.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does secular authority's recognition of God's law demonstrate His sovereignty over civil governments?
2. What does Ezra's dual authority (royal commission and Torah scholar) teach about relating biblical truth to cultural contexts?
3. How should Christians balance submission to governing authorities with primary allegiance to God's word?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Esther 1:14 (Kingdom): And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;)

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