

## **Tattenai's Letter**

Ezra 5:3 – 6:12

by Don Falkos

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Tattenai, the governor of all the Persian territory west of the Euphrates River, went to Judah. He found the Temple reconstruction in Jerusalem was progressing rapidly. He asked Zerubbabel and the other leaders, "Who are you, and who authorized you to rebuild this Temple?"

They replied, "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the Temple that was built many years ago by a great king of Israel. When our ancestors disobeyed God, they were given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who destroyed the Temple and carried the people off into exile in Babylon. However, when Cyrus the Great came to power, he issued a decree to rebuild the house of God. The initial work was carried out by a man named Sheshbazzar. Many years have passed, and the construction is yet to be finished."

Tattenai wrote to King Darius asking him to search the royal archives to determine if this story was true, then to send his instructions on how to proceed.

The king ordered a search, and the original decree of King Cyrus was located. Darius wrote back to Tattenai, "Do not interfere with the building of this Temple of God. Moreover, see to it the expenses incurred are fully paid out of your own treasury, so the construction can continue. Make sure the priests have all they need for carrying out their daily tasks. I want them to offer sacrifices pleasing to their God, and I want them to pray for my well-being. Furthermore, if anyone defies this order, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it.

"I Darius have issued this order. Let it be carried out to the letter."