

A Trustworthy Servant

Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:10

Ezra 4:6-23

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Persian authorities in Judah and Samaria sent a letter to King Artaxerxes.

The people who have returned to this land from exile have been attempting to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. This city has a long and troublesome history of rebellion and sedition. That's why it was destroyed. We felt it our obligation to warn you, your majesty, that if they succeed in their efforts, you can be certain they will never again pay tribute to you.

Artaxerxes replied,

What you tell me about the city of Jerusalem has been confirmed by a search of the royal archives. I agree there is a threat to our interests. I authorize you to stop the reconstruction until I issue the order to continue.

The authorities put a violent halt to the rebuilding efforts. They tore down much of what had been rebuilt and burned the city gates.

When news of what had happened reached Persia, Nehemiah, a personal servant to Artaxerxes, was distraught. He prayed to the Lord, asking forgiveness for his own sins and for those of the people of Israel.

The king asked his servant, "Why so sad?"

Nehemiah replied, "I can't help but be sad. Jerusalem, the ancestral home of my family, still lies in ruins after all these years."

The king inquired, "Is there something you'd like to ask me?"

"My king, if you have found me to be a trustworthy servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city of Jerusalem."

Artaxerxes was pleased. He commissioned Nehemiah as governor of Judah, provided him with letters of introduction, and sent him on his way with a military escort. And so Nehemiah led a third wave of returning exiles back to Judah.