

# RESTORING THE BROKEN

## A Study of Ezra and Nehemiah

15

### Read Nehemiah 6.

1. This chapter shows the persistence of Israel's enemies. Who are these enemies? (v. 1)
2. How do the enemies respond to Nehemiah's success? (v. 2)
3. Why do you think Nehemiah responds the way he does in verse 3?
4. What do you think is behind Sanballat's persistence (v. 4)?
5. Sanballat's badgering has not moved Nehemiah from the work in Jerusalem. How does Sanballat intensify his request for a meeting on the plain of Ono, which is "a day's journey from [Jerusalem] and bordering on hostile regions"?<sup>2</sup> (v. 5)
6. What does Sanballat accuse Nehemiah of in his letter? (vv. 6-7)
7. The letter with accusations was not idle chatter. Previous accusations like this had caused the work on the wall to be halted for years (Ezra 4:11-24).

#### THE ENEMIES SURROUNDING JERUSALEM<sup>1</sup>

**Sanballat:** "A document of 407 BC... refers to Sanballat as 'Governor of Samaria,' " which was the area to the north of Jerusalem.

**Tobiah:** "He had gained a high office" in Ammon, the region northwest of Jerusalem.

**Geshem:** He "was an even more powerful figure than his companions, though probably less earnestly committed to their cause... Geshem and his son ruled a league of Arabian tribes which took control of Moab and Edom (Judah's neighbors to the east and south) together with part of Arabia and the approaches to Egypt."

- a. How does Nehemiah respond? (v. 8)
- b. What does Nehemiah recognize? (v. 9)
- c. List the things you think Nehemiah's simple prayer acknowledges.

8. Teaming up with Tobiah and Shemaiah, Sanballat devises another plan of attack on Nehemiah. What is involved in this new plan? (vv. 10-13)

9. Nehemiah's courage has been evident in refusing Sanballat's requests. What else do you notice in Nehemiah's character? (vv. 10-13)

10. What instructions does the New Testament give us so that, like Nehemiah, we are not easily deceived? (1 Thess. 5:20-22; 1 Jn. 4:1)

#### **SHEMAIAH'S PLOT**

Shemaiah's plan is "a temptation for Nehemiah to do two wrong things: (1) to put his own safety ahead of the work and (2) to break God's law in order to save his life.

... Nehemiah was a layman, and laymen were not allowed into the inner portions of the temple (Num. 18:7)," where Shemaiah is suggesting he should hide.

11. Though Nehemiah might have been tempted to take matters into his own hands regarding his enemies, instead he prays. In this context, what do you think Nehemiah is asking when he asks God to "remember" these enemies?

12. Behind these enemies is The Enemy, Satan himself, seeking to undermine the work of God and his servant Nehemiah. Jesus was also a target of Satan's lies, temptations, and assaults. Look at the following passages and jot down some of the ways Jesus responded to his enemies and his Enemy.

Mt. 4:1-11

Mt. 16:21-23

Mt. 21:23-27

Mt. 26:55-56

Mt. 27:11-14

1 Pet. 2:23

13. Have you ever had someone seek to harm you, tarnish your good name, or turn you away from something you felt God had called you to? If so, how did you feel and respond?

How do the examples of Nehemiah and Jesus help you think through situations like that? (You may also want to consider Rom. 12:17-19.)

14. What is clearly the main tactic against Nehemiah in this chapter? (vv. 9, 14, 19)
15. Nehemiah has the privilege of overseeing the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem—the very walls and gates that Jesus will pass through. What effect does his success have on his enemies? (vv. 15-16)
16. Right through the end of the book of Nehemiah we will see the influence of his enemy Tobiah, who through marriage has formed alliances with the people of Jerusalem and the family of the high priest (Neh. 13:4).

a. What subtle temptation is there for Nehemiah to let down his guard with Tobiah? (v. 19a)

b. How does Tobiah show his true character and intentions? (v. 19b)

17. Nehemiah is courageous, wise, and good, but he recognizes that he is completely dependent on God's showing him favor in order to be successful (Neh. 5:19; 13:31b). What evidence is there in this chapter that God's favor does indeed rest on Nehemiah and the efforts to rebuild the wall?

18. As you finish this lesson, consider the favor that is yours because of Jesus's sacrifice.

*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph. 2:6-7*

---

This study has been adapted and expanded with permission from a study of the same name by Bridge Community Church, Phila., PA.

<sup>1</sup> Derek Kidner, *Ezra & Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 81-84.

<sup>2</sup> Kidner, 98-99.

<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Nehemiah: an Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 73.