

Nehemiah 13:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

Analysis

And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

This verse within Nehemiah 13 addresses themes of reform, confronting compromise, vigilance, finishing well. Nehemiah's return from Persia reveals backsliding, requiring renewed reforms in areas previously addressed—showing constant vigilance's necessity. City gates were strategic both defensively and administratively, controlling access and serving as centers of commerce and justice. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah's final reforms address recurring covenant violations, demonstrating the ongoing challenge of maintaining spiritual commitment across generations. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does regular engagement with Scripture transform understanding of God and His will for your life?
2. What specific commitments do you need to make (or renew) regarding Bible reading, worship, and obedience?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

Interlinear Text

בָּשָׁעָרِ יָמִים	אָלָלָה	כִּאֵשׁ	רַיִם	אָלָלָה	בָּשָׁעָרِ יָמִים
H8179	H6751	H834	H1961	beginned to be dark	And it came to pass that when the gates
בְּקָדְלָתָה וְתַּחֲגָרָה וְתַּסְגָּרָה וְתַּשְׁלַחֲלָתָה	לִפְנֵי יְהוּדָה יְהוּדָה יְהוּדָה יְהוּדָה יְהוּדָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה
H1817	H5462	H559	H6767	before on the sabbath	I commanded should be shut that the gates
אָמַרְתִּי לֹא אַשְׁרָה אֶלָּא מִןְחָתָן	אָמַרְתִּי לֹא אַשְׁרָה אֶלָּא מִןְחָתָן	יְפָתַח יָמִים	יְפָתַח יָמִים	עַד אָמַרְתִּי	till after
H310	H5704	H6605	H3808	that they should not be opened	I commanded
עַל הַעֲמָדָה דְּתִי	וּמְנַעַּר יְהוּדָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	on the sabbath and some of my servants
H5921	H5975	H5288	H7676	set	on the sabbath
בָּשָׁעָרِ יָמִים	לֹא יְבָא	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	And it came to pass that when the gates
H8179	H935	H3808	H8179	be brought in	be brought in
מִשְׁאָל	בְּיָמִים	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּרִיחָלָה	בְּיָמִים	that there should be no burden
H4853	H3117	H7676	H3117	day	on the sabbath

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 23:32 (Parallel theme): It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.