

Nehemiah 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

Analysis

And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

This verse within Nehemiah 2 addresses themes of providence, courage, planning, vision. The narrative shows God's providence in moving the king's heart while honoring Nehemiah's faithful preparation through months of prayer. Jerusalem's wall (chomah, חֹמָה) provided security, dignity, and testimony to God's faithfulness. 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. The post-exilic community had

returned to Judah but remained politically subject to Persia, living under imperial administration while attempting to rebuild covenant identity. Archaeological evidence confirms Persian-period occupation of Jerusalem and the wall's route. 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

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 2:13 deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in human history?
2. What specific action or attitude change does this verse call you to make in your walk with God?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

Interlinear Text

וָאֲצֵאתִי הַ	וּשְׁעֵי יְהוָה	הַגִּבְיָה	לַיְלָה	וְאֵל	פְּנֵי	עַיִן
And I went out	and the gates	of the valley	by night	H413	even before	well
H3318	H8179	H1516	H3915		H6440	H5869
הַתַּנִּין	וְאֵל	וּשְׁעֵי יְהוָה	וְהָאֲשָׁפֹת	וְאֵהָיָה	שָׁבַר	בְּחוֹמֹת
the dragon	H413	and the gates	and to the dung	H1961	and viewed	the walls
H8577		H8179	H830		H7663	H2346
יְרוּשָׁלַם	אֲשֶׁר	מֵהַ	פְּרוּצֵי	וּשְׁעֵי יְהוָה		
of Jerusalem	H834	H0	which were broken down	and the gates		
H3389			H6555	H8179		
אֲכָלוּ	בָּאֵשׁ:					
thereof were consumed	with fire					
H398	H784					

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 1:3 (References Jerusalem): And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

Nehemiah 2:17 (References Jerusalem): Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

Nehemiah 2:3 (Parallel theme): And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

2 Chronicles 26:9 (References Jerusalem): Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them.

Nehemiah 12:31 (Parallel theme): Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate:

Nehemiah 2:15 (Parallel theme): Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org