

Nehemiah 2:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Analysis

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

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. 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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 2:19 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

וַיִּשְׁמַע	סַנְבַּלַּט	הַחֹרֶנִּי	וְטֹבְיָהוּ	הָעֶבֶד	הָעַמּוֹנִי
heard	But when Sanballat	the Horonite	and Tobiah	the servant	the Ammonite
H8085	H5571	H2772	H2900	H5650	H5984
וְגֶשֶׁם	הָעֲרָבִי	וַיִּלְעוּ	לָנוּ	וַיִּבְזּוּ	עַל יָנוּ
and Geshem	the Arabian	it they laughed us to scorn	H0	and despised	H5921
H1654	H6163	H3932		H959	
וַיֹּאמְרוּ	מָה	הַדָּבָר	הַזֶּה	אֵת מֶ	עֲשֵׂי יָם
us and said	H4100	What is this thing	H2088	H834	H859
H559		H1697			H6213
לְ	הַמֶּלֶךְ	אֵת מֶ	מְרִדִּים:		
H5921	against the king	H859	will ye rebel		
	H4428		H4775		

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 6:6 (Kingdom): Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

Mark 5:40 (Parallel theme): And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.