

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

שָׁמַע	לִשְׁמַע	סְנַבָּל	תְּחִרְבָּן	וְתַּבִּיאָה	בָּעֵד	בָּעֵמָה
heard	But when	Sanballat	the Horonite	and Tobiah	the servant	the Ammonite
H8085		H5571		H2772		H5984
וְגַשֵּׁם	בָּעָרֵב	וַיְלַעֲגֹת	לֹא	וְנִבְזֵעַ	לְכָל	עַל
and Geshem	the Arabian	it they laughed us to scorn		and despised		incor
H1654	H6163	H3932		H959		H5921
וְיִאָמַר	רְבִזְבָּר	בְּזִהָה	אֲשֶׁר	עֲשֵׂים	עֲשֵׂה	עֲשֵׂה
us and said	What is this thing	H2088	H834	H859	that ye do	H6213
H4100	H1697					
הַעֲלֵה	מְרַדִּים:					
against the king	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.

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