

Nehemiah 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

Analysis

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

This verse within Nehemiah 4 addresses themes of opposition, perseverance, prayer and work, spiritual warfare. Opposition intensifies as the work progresses, requiring both spiritual response (prayer) and practical measures (armed defense). The construction work (banah, בָּנָה) symbolizes restoring what sin and judgment destroyed. Jerusalem's wall (chomah, חֹמָה) provided security, dignity, and testimony to God's faithfulness. 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 52-day wall completion represents remarkable achievement given opposition and limited resources. Excavations have confirmed portions of Nehemiah's wall and various gates mentioned in the text. 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

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 4:1 deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in human history?
2. What specific contribution can you make to building up Christ's church in your local community?
3. How does understanding your work as part of God's larger purposes transform your approach to daily responsibilities?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י	כַּאֲשֶׁר ר	שָׁמַע ע	סַנְבַּלֵּט	כִּי	אֲנִי חָנוּ
H1961	H834	heard	But it came to pass that when Sanballat	H3588	H587
		H8085	H5571		
בּוֹנִים	אֶת	הַ חוֹמָה	וַיִּחַר	לֹ	וַיִּכְעַס
that we builded	H853	the wall	he was wrath	H0	indignation
H1129		H2346	H2734		H3707
הָרַבָּה	וַיִּלְעַג	עַל	הַיְּהוּדִים:		
and took great	and mocked	H5921	the Jews		
H7235	H3932		H3064		

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 2:10 (Parallel theme): When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Hebrews 11:36 (Parallel theme): And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Nehemiah 2:19 (Parallel theme): 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?

Acts 5:17 (Parallel theme): Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,