

Nehemiah 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

Analysis

And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

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). 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

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 4:16 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

וְיָמֵי	וְיָמֵי	וְיָמֵי	וְיָמֵי	וְיָמֵי
H1961	H4480	And it came to pass from that time	H1931	and the other half
		H3117		H2677
בְּעָבָרִים	בְּעָבָרִים	בְּמִלְאָכָה	וְיָמֵי	מִמְצִיקִים
of my servants	wrought	in the work	and the other half	of them held
H5288	H6213	H4399	H2677	H2388
וְשָׁרִים	וְשָׁרִים	וְקָשָׁת וְתַּחַת	וְשָׁרִים	וְשָׁרִים
both the spears	the shields	and the bows	and the habergeons	and the rulers
H7420	H4043	H7198	H8302	H8269
בְּהַזְּהָה	בְּיַתְּרָה	כָּל	אַחֲרֵי	
were behind	H3605	all the house	of Judah	
H310		H1004	H3063	

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 4:23 (Parallel theme): So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

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