

Nehemiah 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

Analysis

And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 4:2 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

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמָר־וְלֹא־אָמַר
And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria And he spake
H559 H6440 H251 H2428 H8111 H559

לֹא־מִשְׁמָר־וְלֹא־עָשָׂה
Jews these feeble What do will they fortify
H4100 H3064 H537 H6213 H5800 H1992

אָתָה בַּיּוֹם בְּיַמִּים כִּי־זָבֵחַ
themselves will they sacrifice will they make an end in a day will they revive
H2076 H3615 H3117 H2421 H853

שְׁרוּפּוֹת: וְהַמְּה הַעֲפָר מַעֲרָם וְתַּחֲבֵן יְמִינָה
the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned
H68 H6194 H6083 H1992 H8313

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:27 (Parallel theme): But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

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