

Nehemiah 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

Analysis

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 4:3 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

וְטוֹבְיָהּ ה	הָעַמּוֹנִי י	אָצֹל ו	וַיֹּאמֶר	גַּם	אֲשֶׁר	ה
Now Tobiah	the Ammonite	was by him	and he said	H1571	H834	H1992
H2900	H5984	H681	H559			
בֹּנֵי ים		אִם	יֵעָלֶה	לִשְׂוֹעַ	וְיִפֹּל	
Even that which they build	H518	go up	if a fox	he shall even break down		
H1129		H5927	H7776	H6555		
חֹמֶת	אֲבִנֵיהֶם:					
wall	their stone					
H2346	H68					

Additional Cross-References

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?