

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 22ND, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

### RUMORS (NEHEMIAH 6:1-9)

#### FOCUSING ATTACKS ON LEADERSHIP

The walls were completed all the way around the city. All that remained were the doors at the city gates; then, the rebuilding would be finished.

- Nehemiah's enemies knew that it was "now-or-never" to stop the work from being completed. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem now focused directly on Nehemiah.

Nehemiah gave the people of Jerusalem strength and hoped through his extraordinary leadership.

- His enemies hoped to destroy the people of Jerusalem by attacking and destroying their leader. Since **the fallout is greater when leaders fall, most often, attacks will be directed at those that lead.**

#### REQUESTING A MEETING

On five separate occasions, Sanballat requested a meeting on neutral ground with Nehemiah, but Nehemiah showed great discernment and declined every time.

- Not only was he aware that they planned to harm him, but a meeting would pull him away from the work that needed to be done, his supporters, and his defense.

#### DISCERNMENT

Being able to judge matters by God's view of them, and not by their outward appearance.

- If we want to see things as God sees them **we must know His Word and rely on His Spirit.** Discernment comes through spiritual maturity, and **as we grow in our relationship with God, so should our ability to discern correctly.**

A lot of us suffer today because we have not "grown-up" yet and are still "spiritual infants" (Heb. 12:5-14).

- We follow leaders and teachers who give a good appearance or motivational speech, but they aren't walking in the nature of Jesus. We blindly accept things because they look good or sound good.

#### THE OPEN LETTER

On the fifth attempt, Sanballat sent his aide with an open letter to Nehemiah. An unsealed letter would have meant that it was available for everyone to read and to share its contents on its way to the recipient.

- This was an attempt to unsettle Nehemiah or create doubt with those under his leadership with slanderous rumors.

#### GOSSIP AND SLANDER

Gossip happens when someone's personal business is passed on to others. Slander happens when information is fabricated and broadcasted wherever the most damage can be done.

- Both are detestable to God and contrary to His nature. **"You once walked in these things, but now you must put them away"** (Col. 3:7-8).

#### AMBIGUOUS "THEY"

The open letter says that the belief that Nehemiah was leading a rebellion against the king and even positioning prophets to claim that he was the new king of Judah was **"reported among the nations."**

- In other words, **"Everybody thinks this..."** or **"They are saying this...."** Well, **who exactly is everybody?**

Nehemiah doesn't address slander from a **"nameless" group**; instead, he goes straight to the source and says, "There is nothing to these rumors **you** are spreading; **you** are inventing them in your own mind."

- Instead of addressing the rumors, he prays and gets back to work. **We must take care of our character and trust God with our reputation!**

#### INTIMIDATION (NEHEMIAH 6:10-14)

##### FALSE PROPHET

Nehemiah went to see this man Shemaiah, who was believed to be a prophet. Nehemiah was able to discern that God did not speak through Shemaiah but that he was hired by Sanballat and Tobiah to instill fear in him.

- He knew that what was being suggested, to barricade himself in the temple, was not in alignment with the heart of God.

Nehemiah knew that Shemaiah was a false prophet because the message he claimed to have from God directly contradicted the Word of God (Deut. 13:1-5 and 18:20-22).

- "For what does the scripture say?" (Rom.4:3) must be the test of any message, even if that message is coming from someone that claims to be a Christ-follower.

#### NOT IN ALIGNMENT

Nehemiah knew that if he "ran away" and hid inside the temple, that fear would have stopped his work from continuing, and he would have disobeyed God.

- Only priests were allowed in the temple. In 2 Chron. 26, King Uzziah, who was not a priest, went into the temple and was struck with leprosy.

#### HE IS FAITHFUL

Instead of lashing out at the false prophet and those who commissioned him for evil, he commits them and the situation to God.

- God's faithfulness to Nehemiah gave him confidence that God would faithfully handle this situation as well. **God's past faithfulness should strengthen our trust and dependence on Him!**

#### COMPLETION (NEHEMIAH 6:15-19)

##### THE WORK IS COMPLETED

The rebuilding of the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth month of Elul (early fall, Sept.). Even with the repeated opposition, it only took fifty-two days to complete.

- This attested to Nehemiah's God-given ability to inspire and lead the people, as well as God's favor and protection on them as they worked to complete the rebuilding.

A problem that existed for over a hundred years was rectified in only 52 days! It's not like no one saw the problem or wanted the walls rebuilt.

- Many people saw the broken walls and the effect it had on the lives of those in Jerusalem, but no one got past the place of wishing there were walls.

When Nehemiah was burdened with the desire to rebuild (1:1), he spent four months in prayer before he got to work (2:1) on a job that lasted half that time.

- While this may seem disproportionate, it shows us that the spiritual battle is greater and of more importance than the material battle.

#### THE TABLES ARE TURNED

The pagan nations around Jerusalem were intimidated by what had been accomplished and "lost their confidence, for they realized this task had been accomplished by our God."

- They expected the effort to fail, but the way that it was accomplished showed that it was not of man but of the one true God. (Acts 5:38-39)

#### OUTWARDLY "GOOD"

Tobiah had a good rapport with the nobles, who even tried to mention his "good deeds" to Nehemiah. **Why do some think so highly of Tobiah when we see the conflict he caused?**

- Simply doing good deeds does not make you a good person! You can have the **outward appearance of being good with wrong motives and a heart that is far from God.**

Tobiah, like the Pharisees described in Matt. 23, took great care to look outwardly as they were "good," but inwardly, they were full of greed, self-indulgence, and wickedness.

- "Man does not see what the Lord sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord sees the heart. (1 Sam.16:7)."

#### MANY WERE BOUND BY OATH

Many of the nobles had a vested interest in Sanballat and his success since he and his sons were married to their daughters.

- If the nobles had been studying and meditating on the Word of God, they would have had discernment and not been walking "in the counsel of the ungodly" (Ps. 1:1)

#### DELAYED WORK

- **Are we dreaming too small?**
- God used Nehemiah to fix a 100-year-old problem in less than two months. That same God sits on the throne today and wants to work in and through us.
- **Is there a "problem" that still exists that we haven't depended on God for?**

#### LOOKING INWARD

- **Are we like the Pharisees and Tobiah, giving the perception of being good, but our hearts are full of deceit and far from God?**
- **What sets the standard in which we measure goodness?**
- **Being "good" and playing the part is not enough!** (Matt. 7:22-23)