

Nehemiah 4:1-23 – Opposition to Rebuilding

In chapter 3, the building of the walls of Jerusalem progressed quickly. The enemies of Israel and of God didn't like the idea of Jerusalem being rebuilt. They did what they could to discourage and oppose the building. When doing God's work, we should not think that everything will go smoothly. In fact, if it does go smoothly, we may want to question if we really are doing God's work. The enemies of God are constantly in opposition to the work of God. We should not be surprised or discouraged when opposition happens. Jesus was never surprised or discouraged by the opposition he faced.

Read Nehemiah 4:1-6.

We ran into Sanballat in 2:10 and 19. He was identified as a Horonite which may mean that he was from Beth-Horon, a town near the border of Samaria and Judah. What did Sanballat do when he heard about the building in Jerusalem? To whom did Sanballat direct his comments? (4:1-2)

The other main opponent to the rebuilding was an Ammonite named Tobiah? Tobiah was also mentioned in 2:10 and 19. Sanballat represented the northern opponents, the Samaritans. Tobiah represented the eastern opponents, the Ammonites. Remember these two names. They will appear later in Nehemiah in very surprising ways. How did Tobiah react to the news of the building progress? (4:3)

In verses 4 and 5, how did Nehemiah react to the taunts and jeering of Sanballat and Tobiah? This may remind us of some of David's psalms. How should we react to those who oppose God's work?

Based on verse 6, did the taunts and jeers of their enemies stop the building effort?

Read Nehemiah 4:7-14.

Verse 7 mentions two more enemies besides the ones on the north and the east. The Arabs were to the south and the Ashdodites were to the west. From 1 Samuel, Ashdod was a city of the Philistines. When these enemies heard that the work had continued and that the gaps in the walls were being filled in, how did they react? (4:7-8)

What two things did Nehemiah and those with him do in reaction to the plots of their enemies? Why are both important? (4:9)

In verses 10 and 12, what pressure did Nehemiah receive from his own people to slow or stop the building? In verse 11, the plots and threats of the enemies from verse 8 were echoed.

In response to the potential for discouragement, what changes did Nehemiah make to alleviate some of the fears of the Israelites? What words of encouragement did Nehemiah give to the people? (4:13-14)

Read Nehemiah 4:15-23.

In verses 15-18, how did the opposition effect the work on the wall? Were the measures that were taken wise? What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah about being flexible to adopt our plans to changing circumstances?

Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was a big task and people were spread out around the city working on different sections of the walls. This created a communication challenge and a vulnerability. How did Nehemiah deal with these challenges? What additional words of encouragement did Nehemiah give in verse 20? (4:19-20)

In verse 21, despite the changes that were made, the work continued. What further measures were taken for safety in verses 21 and 22?

What kind of leader was Nehemiah? Did he sit back and watch everything from a comfortable chair or was he out front leading? What kind of example did Nehemiah and his men provide for the other workers?

What positive lessons can we learn from Nehemiah's leadership and organization?