

## Nehemiah 6:1-19 – Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing

Chapter 4 dealt with external opposition to the building of the wall. Chapter 5 recounted internal financial problems experienced due to the massive effort to finish the wall. Chapter 6 deals with opposition to Nehemiah personally. Some people say the Bible is not relevant to today. Nehemiah, as leader, dealt with foreign opposition, an economic crisis and opponents who made up lies about him and who tried different tricks to discredit him. That sounds like today’s headlines.

### **Read Nehemiah 6:1-9.**

In verse 1, three enemies of Israel reappeared. They were Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. How did they react when they heard that there were no more holes or breaches in the wall? (6:1-2)

How do you think Nehemiah knew that his enemies’ offer of having peace talks was not legitimate? What were his enemies planning to do at the “peace talks”? (6:2)

How did Nehemiah respond to their request to meet? Was Nehemiah right in what he did? Some people think two parties at odds can always work things out just by talking things through. Is that true? (6:3)

The enemies didn’t stop after just one attempt. They tried the same thing four different times. Nehemiah was consistent in his response. What can we learn from Nehemiah in how he handled this situation? What can we learn about the persistence of the enemies of God? (6:4)

On the fifth time, the enemies turned up the heat. What lies did they make up about Nehemiah? How did they attempt to make Nehemiah afraid? If we give in to fear, what can result? How did Nehemiah respond to their threats? (6:5-9)

### **Read Nehemiah 6:10-14.**

What did Shemaiah, as a “prophet”, urge Nehemiah to do? Why wouldn’t Nehemiah do what Shemaiah said? 1 John 4:1 tells us to test the spirits because there are many false prophets. If someone claims to be a prophet and tells us to break God’s known commands then that person is a false prophet. (6:10-11)

Nehemiah later found out why Shemaiah uttered false prophecy? What was his motivation? Who was behind Shemaiah's false prophecy? (6:12-13)

God's choice of a cupbearer may seem like an odd choice but who better to see through false prophets and political schemers than someone who may have seen it on a daily basis when he was in the orb of the King of Persia. When someone says that they have a "word from God" for us, should we immediately accept the word as God's word?

Verse 14 mentioned a prophetess and other prophets who tried to lead Nehemiah astray and make him afraid. What can we learn about dealing with the enemies of God? Can we let our guard down after an initial victory?

**Read Nehemiah 6:15-19.**

The wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul. When is the month of Elul on our calendar? How long did it take to finish the wall? We could calculate when the project began if we knew whether the days counted were work days only or if they included all calendar days including Sabbaths. What does this say about the resolve of Nehemiah and the people to build the wall? (6:15)

How did the enemies of Israel and surrounding nations respond when they heard that the wall was complete? (6:16)

While Nehemiah was fending off the enemies of Israel, like Sanballat and Tobiah, what were some of the nobles of Judah doing? How do you think Sanballat and Tobiah kept informed about the progress of the wall? (6:17-19)

From chapter 3:4,30, we learned that Meshullam the son of Berechiah worked on two sections of the wall. 3:30 says that he worked next to his chamber (not house). This may imply that Meshullam was a Levite or even a priest. How were Tobiah and Meshullam tied together? We are not told here how Nehemiah reacted to this fraternizing with the enemy. What can we learn from Nehemiah about dealing with enemies both external and internal? We can still love our enemies while not being steam rolled by them. (6:18-19)