

Nehemiah 5:1-19 – Difficult Economic Times

Chapter 4 dealt with external opposition to the wall building project. Chapter 5 recounted internal problems that were experienced while the building of the wall progressed. The wall project occurred during the months of July, August and September. While the men were working on the wall they were not able to devote sufficient time in the fields during a crucial time. This brought economic hardship on the poor agricultural families. Nehemiah did not record when he wanted to complete the project. He may have been pushing to finish the wall before the month of Tishri which included the Jewish New Year, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths (Sukkot).

Read Nehemiah 5:1-5.

Instead of dealing with hostile Samaritans, Ammonites and Arabs, who was the focus of the outcry of the people in verse 1?

There are three different problems mentioned in verses 2-4. What problem was mentioned in verse 2?

What problem was mentioned in verse 3? What problem was mentioned in verse 4?

As a result of the problems mentioned in verses 2-4 they felt forced to do something they did not want to do. What were they forced to do to alleviate their economic problems? (5:5)

Read Nehemiah 5:6-13.

What was Nehemiah's initial response when he heard about these complaints? (5:6)

After thinking about the complaints, Nehemiah brought charges against the nobles and officials as was his right as governor. He held a great assembly against them. In verses 7 and 8, what two charges did he make? What response did the nobles and officials give to the charges? (5:7-8)

In verse 9, Nehemiah told them that what they were doing was not good and that they needed to walk in the fear of God. What might the enemies of Israel have done if they heard about Israel's current financial arrangements? (5:9)

In verse 10, Nehemiah said that he and some with him were lending money and grain? Is it wrong to lend people money? In verses 10 and 11, what did Nehemiah say the people needed to do to alleviate the economic problems?

In verses 12 and 13, how did the people respond to Nehemiah's judgments?

Read Nehemiah 5:14-19.

During Nehemiah's first trip to Jerusalem, how many years was Nehemiah governor of Judah? (5:14)

What steps did Nehemiah take as governor to alleviate the tax burden on the people of Judah? How did he differ from previous governors? What motivated Nehemiah to be different from the previous governors? (5:14-15)

What was Nehemiah's primary focus when he came to Jerusalem? (5:16)

Nehemiah had his own economic pressures? What were they? (5:17-18)

From verse 18, why didn't Nehemiah demand the food allowance of the governor even though he had a lot of mouths to feed? What did Nehemiah ask God to do in verse 19?

Have you ever run across Christians leaders who seemed to be more interested in personal wealth building than in furthering the Kingdom of God? Do you run to them or run away from them?