

NEHEMIAH 6: 1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and to the rest of our enemies, that I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though even to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates;)

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, insidiously desire a conference with Nehemiah, which he refuses, Neh 6:1-4. They then charge him with the design of rebelling, and causing himself to be made king, Neh 6:5-7; which he denies, and prays to God for support, Neh 6:8, Neh 6:9. A false prophet is hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, to put him in fear; he discovers the imposture, and defeats their design, Neh 6:10-13. He prays to God against them, Neh 6:14. The wall is finished in fifty-two days, Neh 6:15. He discovers a secret and treasonable correspondence between Tobiah and some of the Jewish nobles, Neh 6:16-19.

NEHEMIAH 6: 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together in the villages in the plain of Ono." But they intended to harm me.

Verse 2

Come, let us meet together in - the plain of Ono - They wished to get him out of Jerusalem from among his friends, that they might either carry him off, or murder him. Ono is supposed to have been in the tribe of Benjamin, near Jordan.

NEHEMIAH 6: 3 I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I can't come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?"

Verse 3

I am doing a great work - Though he knew their design, he does not think it prudent to mention it. Had he done so, they would probably have gone to extremities, finding that they were discovered; and perhaps in a formidable body attacked Jerusalem, when ill provided to sustain such a shock. They wished to effect their purpose rather by treachery than by open violence. I know not any language which a man who is employed on important labors can use more suitably, as an answer to the thousand invitations and provocations he may have to remit his work, enter into useless or trivial conferences, or notice weak, wicked, and malicious attacks on his work and his motives: "I am doing a great work, so I cannot stoop to your nonsense, or notice your malevolence. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to such as you?"

NEHEMIAH 6: 4 They sent to me four times after this sort; and I answered them the same way.

NEHEMIAH 6: 5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me the same way the fifth time with an open letter in his hand,

Verse 5

With an open letter in his hand - This was an insult to a person of Nehemiah's quality: as letters sent to chiefs and governors in the East are always carefully folded up, and put in costly silken bags, and these carefully sealed. The circumstance is thus marked to show the contempt he (Sanballat) had for him.

NEHEMIAH 6: 6 in which was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel. Because of that, you are building the wall. You would be their king, according to these words.

Verse 6

And Gashmu saith it - You are accused of crimes against the state, and Geshem, the Arabian, is your accuser.

NEHEMIAH 6: 7 You have also appointed prophets to preach of you at Jerusalem, saying, 'There is a king in Judah!' Now it will be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together."

Verse 7

Thou hast also appointed prophets - Persons who pretend to be commissioned to preach to the people, and say, Nehemiah reigneth!

Come now therefore, and let us take counsel - Come and justify yourself before me. This was a trick to get Nehemiah into his power.

NEHEMIAH 6: 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "There are no such things done as you say, but you imagine them out of your own heart."

Verse 8

There are no such things done - You well know that what you say is false: I shall not, therefore, trouble myself about a false charge.

NEHEMIAH 6: 9 For they all would have made us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened from the work, that it not be done." But now, strengthen my hands.

NEHEMIAH 6: 10 I went to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home; and he said, "Let us meet together in God's house, within the temple, and let us

shut the doors of the temple; for they will come to kill you; yes, in the night will they come to kill you.”

Verse 10

Who was shut up - Lived in a sequestered, solitary state; pretending to sanctity, and to close intercourse with God.

Let us meet together in the house of God - The meaning is, "Shut yourself up in the temple; appear to have taken sanctuary there, for in it alone can you find safety." This he said to discourage and disgrace him, and to ruin the people; for, had Nehemiah taken his advice, the people would have been without a leader, their enemies would have come upon them at once, and they would have been an easy prey. Besides, had Nehemiah done this, he would have been shut up in the temple, his government would have been declared at an end, and Sanballat would have assumed the reins.

NEHEMIAH 6: 11 I said, "Should such a man as I flee? Who is there that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

Verse 11

Should such a man as I flee? - Shall I, who am governor of the people, appointed both by God and the king, shall I betray my trust, and leave the flock without a shepherd? Shall I be a traitor, and abandon the office to which I am appointed? - No! Who, in my situation, with such responsibility, and such prospects, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not: I will stand at my post, and be ready to receive my enemies whensoever they come; so let Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem look to themselves.

NEHEMIAH 6: 12 I discerned, and behold, God had not sent him; but he pronounced this prophecy against me. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

NEHEMIAH 6: 13 He hired so that I would be afraid, do so, and sin, and that they might have material for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

NEHEMIAH 6: 14 "Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear."

Verse 14

And on the prophetess Noadiah - Whether this was a prophet or prophetess, we cannot tell; the Hebrew text only makes her a prophetess; all the versions have Noadiah the prophet, except the Arabic which has Younadaa the prophet. I think the ה he at the end of נביאה nebiah is a mistake, and that we should read Noadiah the prophet.

NEHEMIAH 6: 15 So the wall was finished in the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.

Verse 15

The twenty and fifth - of - Elul - This Jewish month answers to a part of our August and September.

Fifty and two days - I see no difficulty in supposing that several thousand workmen, each of whom was working as for God, should be able to complete this wall in fifty-two days. There is little doubt that several parts of the old wall were entire; in many places the foundations still remained; there were all the materials of the old wall still at hand; and though they had to clear and carry away much rubbish, yet they do not appear to have had any stones to quarry. The work mentioned here was little when compared to what Caesar did in Gaul and other places; and to what Titus did at Jerusalem, who built a wall round Jerusalem of five thousand paces in three days, besides, thirteen towers of ten stadia in circuit. And Quintus Curtius and Arrian inform us that Alexander the Great built the walls of Alexandria, on the Tanais, which were nearly eight miles in compass, in the space of between twenty and thirty days. Nehemiah therefore had time sufficient in fifty-two days to repair and restore the walls of Jerusalem. See Calmet on this place.

NEHEMIAH 6: 16 When all our enemies heard of it, all the nations that were around us were afraid, and were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was worked of our God.

Verse 16

This work was wrought of our God - This is an additional reason why we should not wonder at the shortness of the time in which so great a work was done, for God helped them by an especial providence; and this was so very observable, that their carnal enemies could discover it.

NEHEMIAH 6: 17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.

Verse 17

The nobles of Judah sent many letters - The circumstances marked in this and the following verses show still more clearly the difficulties which Nehemiah had to encounter; he had enemies without and false friends within. A treacherous correspondence was carried on between the nobles of Judah and the Ammonites; and had almost any other man been at the head of the Jewish affairs, Jerusalem had never been re-established.

NEHEMIAH 6: 18 For there were many in Judah sworn to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as wife.

Verse 18

He was the son-in-law of Shechaniah - Previously to the coming of Nehemiah, the Jews seemed to be fast intermixing with the heathen, by intermarriages with Ashdodites, Ammonites, and Moabites; see Neh 13:23. Ezra had many evils of this kind to redress, (Ezr 9:3, etc.), chiefly among the common people, though there were both chiefs and priests in that trespass. But here we find the heathen and Jewish nobles interlinked; and the latter were so far imbued with the spirit of idolatry, that they forgot God, his service, their brethren, and their own souls.

NEHEMIAH 6: 19 Also they spoke of his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.
