
THE ARCHENEMY OF NEHEMIAH

According to the Bible, in Nehemiah chapter 2, King Artaxerxes issued a decree allowing his trusted servant, Nehemiah his cupbearer, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city that were destroyed many years earlier by the king of Babylon, when the Jewish people were cast into exile.

But not everyone was happy with the decree of Artaxerxes. Among them was a governor of Samaria by the name of Sanballat. After receiving the decree, the Bible states the following:

"But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish; stones that are burned?"

Nehemiah 4: 1-2

Sanballat winds up using various plots to try and entice Nehemiah away from building the wall so that he can have him killed. But every time he does, Nehemiah sees through his evil schemes and the wall of Jerusalem gets totally rebuilt.

A letter preserved in history, which dates back to about 407 B.C., actually makes mention of Sanballat. The letter was found in the ancient city of Elephantine and was written by the priests living there requesting authorization to rebuild a Jewish temple in that city.

In the following letter, they describe how the Jewish temple in the city had been maliciously destroyed by the priests of a Pagan Egyptian god:

"To the governor of Judah, our lord Bagoas, from your servants Yedoniah and the priests who live at Elephantine . . . the priest of the god Khnub, who lived in this city, plotted with the commander in chief, Vidaranag, to wipe out the temple . . . advancing with their weapons . . . They burned the temple to the ground, as well as smashing the stone pillars that were there . . . Many of the articles that were in the temple along with the vessels of gold and silver were carried off. . . . Letters prior to this one have also been sent to the high priest Johanan and the priests in Jerusalem. (This is probably the same Johanan mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22) We have also written a letter making this whole incident known to Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of **Sanballat governor of Samaria.**"

LEARN TO PRAY LIKE NEHEMIAH

"I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, . . . We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded . . . Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded.

If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand."

Nehemiah 1:5-10

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