

## **Nehemiah 6:10-14– A Snake in God’s House**

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, Armstrong, Gaebelien, Barnes, Geneva, Clarke, Gill, JFB, Delitzsch, Gray, Poole, Henry, Expositor, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Most people are terrified of snakes, even garden snakes. I remember some years ago a lady found a snake in her bed and thought she would have a heart attack. **But it was a harmless snake.**

**But what happens when the snake is poisonous?** That ratchets it up a notch, doesn’t it?

**And what happens if that snake has two legs, is poisonous, and is a member of your family?** There is cause for real worry then, isn’t there?

**That was the situation Nehemiah** and those struggling to repair the temple and restore worship faced. They faced a real poisonous snake in their midst.

**So they had to deal with it.** This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

**Distraction for Nehemiah**

**Dismissal of the Distractors**

**Destruction of the Distractors**

Our goals are: **That you will learn that wicked men, even from inside the church, will try to make you sin against God and ignore your duty, and so rob Christ of his rightful honor.**

### **Distraction of Nehemiah**

10 Afterward I came to the house of **Shemaiah** the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a **secret informer**; and he said, "**Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple**, and let us close the doors of the temple, for **they are coming to kill you**; indeed, at night they will come to kill you." 11 And I said, "**Should such a man as I flee?** And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? **I will not go in!**"

**1. In the course of doing his work, Nehemiah came to the house of a man named Shemaiah, a man claiming to be a prophet.**

If Shemaiah were a prophet, he wasn’t a good prophet. **They likely called him a prophet because he pretended to prophesy.**

**2. Instead of being a true prophet of God, Shemaiah was a secret informer to Nehemiah’s enemies: Sanballat and Tobiah.**

Shemaiah was as fake as a 3-dollar bill.

**3. Shemaiah urged Nehemiah to go into the house of God, to a part of the temple he was not supposed to go.**

**Ordinary persons were no allowed into that part of the temple.**

Numbers 18:7 "Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, **but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.**"

**Nehemiah was likely a eunuch, who had even more restrictions.**

But Shemaiah pretended that Nehemiah's best place of security was in the Holiest Place, rather than the horns of the altar outside of the temple where one could flee for safety.

**The real reason he wanted Nehemiah to go into the temple was to distract him from the work God called him to do.**

**If Shemaiah had suggested Nehemiah go to the horns of the altar of sacrifice in order to be protected from the revenger, that might have made more sense, but not this!**

**Shemaiah was like the unnamed prophet** who told the true prophet that God had changed his mind and the true prophet needed to come into his house to eat bread and drink water. **That true prophet was killed by God for his disobedience.**

**4. Nehemiah's response was quick; without aggravating Shemaiah, he said: "No, I won't go in."**

**He would not hide because God told him to stand and build!** Running was not in his vocabulary.

**He would not hide because God appointed him governor and he had to be the shepherd of God's people.** He could not flee or the sheep would be scattered. That would have been a dereliction of duty!

**He would not hide because he knew God was well able to protect him if he remained faithful.** And even if God allowed injury to come to him as he worked outside, he was confident as the Hebrew boys were 100 years before.

They would not bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image even if they died for refusing.

**He would not hide because if he fled it would have looked like he was guilty of treason.**

**He would not hide because he could have been killed or kidnapped in secret.**

## **5. Lessons:**

**a. Part of your life is to endure the Refiner's fire as Nehemiah did, just like diamonds have to endure bruising to shine, and just like silver needs heat to be purified.**

God is your Refiner. Expect it.

**b. People will do anything for money, even sell out their own family.**

Avoid people like those. Don't be friends with them. Don't marry them.

**c. Poison from preachers is more difficult to identify because they pretend to be teachers of God.**

It is easier to recognize filth from our social scientists, but we tend to drop our guards against preachers. Be warned!

**Standing in a pulpit does not make one a man of God.** Remember how many pastors were marching and celebrating in the homosexual parades recently?

**You see, using religion is one of the strongest forces you could use on man!**

Hindus are notorious in using their religion to rob people.

**d. "God wouldn't mind if you break the Sabbath.**

**God knows everybody commits adultery these days, so it is okay if you do.**

**God knows if you play and win the lottery you will be able to help the poor.**

**You can refuse to take care of your parents if you are helping children in Africa!**

**These are the things your modern-day Shemaiah's would tell you to make you sin and hurt Christ's cause.**

The Devil and his people will do anything to stop you from doing God's work.

## **Dismissal of the Distractors**

12 Then I perceived that **God had not sent him at all**, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because **Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.** 13 For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid

and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

**1. God revealed to Nehemiah that Shemaiah was not a true prophet but one who worked for Sanballat.**

Shemaiah was a hired hand, but worse, he was a false prophet. He prophesied for money, like Balaam.

But **severe punishment was reserved for those who lied about God's Word.**

**2. God revealed that Shemaiah's goal was to make Nehemiah afraid, which would then cause him to act inappropriately and enter into the temple to hide.**

God's Word caused the sheep's clothing over this wolf to fall off and expose who he really was.

**3. God revealed that Shemaiah then would pass that information on to Sanballat and company so they would then turn and bring shame on Nehemiah and kill him.**

**Wasn't this what the Jews constantly did to Jesus?** They often tried to trick him so they could destroy him. (*Isn't it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? Shouldn't the woman caught in adultery be executed?*)

If Nehemiah had compromise and run for personal protection, wouldn't this have **discouraged the workers?**

Wouldn't this have **stopped the completion of the walls,** and hence, limited the worship of God?

Would this not **have been shameful?**

**4. Lessons:**

**a. Trust the providence of God and remain faithful.** You never have to sin to do the work of the Lord.

**b. No weapons formed against God's people will prosper.** And those who are guilty will be exposed.

Psalm 56:3 Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

*Be not dismayed whatever happens, God will take care of you.*

**c. Be sure your sins will find you out...exposing who you really are.** Shemaiah might not have thought that, but God saw his sins and spoke of them to Nehemiah.

And so God will announce all your sins to the world, if you don't repent! And at that time, you will have no time to repent.

**d. Don't be a coward!** Jesus set his face like flint for you.

Don't shame him by refusing to honor his name.

Stand up **for his kingdom!**

Stand up **against the world.**

Stand **against snakes!**

Stand **for truth.**

### **Destruction of the Distractors**

14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.

**1. Nehemiah then passionately prayed for God to judge all those who were bent on stopping the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls to secure God's people and restore the worship of Yahweh.**

Specifically, he singled out:

**Tobiah** – the Ammonite, a relative of the Jews, but one who hated the restoration of Jerusalem. Maybe he didn't hate God, but he hated a prosperous Jewish nation.

**Sanballat** – the mastermind behind the opposition. He too hated the thought of Jewish ascendancy.

**Noadiah** – the prophetess. Under exceptional circumstances God appointed Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah as prophetesses. **But this one was not a true prophetess.**

She was likely hired to confirm Shemaiah's words. **Her words were for sale to the highest bidder, like false preachers today.**

**Other prophets.** We don't know who these were, but we know what their goal in life was!

**2. There was nothing wrong in this request that God would "remember" Sanballat and Tobiah.**

Nehemiah wanted God to **remember them for judgment!**

Nehemiah **did not attempt to take revenge on his enemies** but he committed them to God for God's judgment on them.

We see a similar example in the life of Apostle Paul.

2 Timothy 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.

**3. Nehemiah knew Sanballat and his false prophets were trying to make him afraid and he knew that even the strongest man was subject to becoming fearful when the size of the enemy increases.**

So he had to call out to God for help.

**4. Lessons:**

**a. Don't hate your enemies and don't try to get even with them. Commit them to the Lord and let him deal with them.**

Self-defense is yours, but revenge is the Lord's, not yours!

Remember, Jesus, when he was reviled, did not revile in return but committed himself to the one who judges righteously. 1Peter 2:23. And so should you.

**b. Don't hate the church's enemies and don't try to get even with them.** Commit them to the Lord and him deal with them.

**c. Learn to pray against false teachers who are corrupting the church of Jesus, lying to them to gain their applause.**

That's what you pray for when you say, "Your kingdom come."

Sing, memorize, and pray the Psalms of Imprecation.

The heads of the snakes have to be crushed.

**Conclusion:**

There were snakes in the church who tried to harm Nehemiah and stop him from rebuilding the walls and repairing the temple. Had they succeeded it would have injured the kingdom and robbed Jesus of his praises.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus:

**1. Remember who Christ is to you – your Savior, and let this make you work for his honor...**...this will make you take on snakes – poisonous snakes – snakes that are bent on harming the church.

**2. Reject those snakes who attempt to distract you from your work – with their hissing...**...from teaching your children, from changing your God-given priorities, from loving your spouse, from focusing on advancing Christ's cause, from inviting people to your home to show them God's love, from spending your money wisely, from caring for the lonely, or from being bold to stand up for truth in society!

**3. Re-focus in sharing the message of the Gospel, rather than on social work, to see the lost brought into the kingdom of Jesus.**

Finally: God will look on all men to see ***if they are sinners who are still carrying the burden of their sins***. If he sees you that way, you will spend eternity in hell. But it is not too late, my friend. Receive Jesus' life and death and you will be free, free from the burdens of sins!