

Through Hidden Opposition: Discernment

Nehemiah 6:10–19



Week Nine

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Nehemiah 6:10–19

BLIND SIGHT

Modern medicine now has the ability to heal some forms of congenital blindness. The blind eye can be corrected through the use of latest restorative procedures. However, to the brain that has never seen the spectrum of the rainbow, the different intensities of light, and the various forms of shapes, nothing registers. Though the physical condition of the eye is functioning, the mind itself needs to be healed. Beyond the work of the physicians, the brain must be reprogrammed. So, when Jesus healed the boy who had been blind since birth (John 9), giving him the ability not only to see but to recognize everything, it was a tremendous miracle! Jesus not only healed his eyes but regenerated his mind, too.

Similarly, though our eyes might be functioning, we also need the miracle of sight. Not physical sight; our spiritual vision needs remedying so that we may discern different entities at work. Simple things like invitations, letters, and words may not be so simple. This week's lesson looks at two instances in Nehemiah 6 where the veil of blindness was lifted and discernment was granted.



inScribe

Write out Nehemiah 6:10–19 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Nehemiah 6:12, 16. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline it, or mind map the chapter.



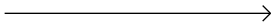
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases



Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How is your perception? Do you look beyond the surface in your relationships? Do you ask God to open your eyes to your own true condition?



Read more at www.inversebible.org/neh9-3

DISCERNING FALSE PROPHECIES

When Nehemiah was not intimidated by social deception (invitation to compromising dialogue) or by military deception (rumors of rebellion by letter), the enemies resorted to spiritual deception. A prophet named Shemaiah (Nehemiah 6:10) sounded quite concerned for Nehemiah’s welfare. In this dramatic subplot, this man, who was a shut-in in his own house (“a secret informer” in NKJV), signifying the gravity of the matter, became anxious about murder plots in the night and suggested that they both find safety in the temple.

Nehemiah did not flinch and again perceived the deception of the enemies in using a prophet to mislead him. He sensed that Sanballat and Tobiah were behind the plot and that Shemaiah was hired. How did he know? First, a prophet would be more concerned over the well-being of God’s people and God’s will regarding His work. There was an apparent dissonance between Nehemiah’s work, which God had been leading this entire time, and the warning of the prophet. Shemaiah’s proposition meant Nehemiah would have to abandon his people, instilling fear in them and undermining the courage he had been portraying throughout the entire project.

Second, Shemaiah suggested meeting “within the temple” (verse 10), inferring the Holy Place, where only priests were permitted; lay-people were completely forbidden to enter. One test of a prophet is that they do not contradict what has previously been established by God. The fact that his “prophecy” went against the law of God proved that Shemaiah was a false prophet. Unfortunately, Shemaiah is not the only Bible prophet to fall for the love of money.

Nehemiah replied with predictable faithfulness, “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!” (verse 11, NKJV). Clearly aware of the scheme, he called out the trickery for what it was, refusing to violate the temple. Not blinded by the fear of an assassination attempt nor mystified by the utterings of a prophet, Nehemiah continued to keep his eyes clear.

Apparently, Shemaiah was not the only prophet who had tried to deceive him. Tobiah and Sanballat had recruited the prophetess Noadiah (she is found nowhere else in the Bible) and other prophets to cause Nehemiah to fear without success (verse 14).

DISCERNING THE WORK OF GOD

The work on the wall of Jerusalem was completed in an astonishing fifty-two days—less than two months (Nehemiah 6:15). Even by modern standards, to build a wall around Jerusalem with the number of people and the breadth of resources needed within this timeframe is bewildering. The project was completed so quickly that even the enemies “perceived that this work was done by [Israel’s] God” (verse 16, NKJV). For nearly six chapters, Sanballat and his coalition caused a slew of problems for Nehemiah, but they finally came to a point where they recognized they were going against the work of God. When biblical leadership is sharpened, focused, and consecrated, the visions held by the individuals will drive them to work efficiently and effectively, causing those around them to marvel in the glory of God’s ability.

Though we wish the narrative could end victoriously there, it does not. Even though the walls had been finished and generally acknowledged as the work of God Himself, attempts to discredit the reputation of Nehemiah continued to wax. Tobiah became just as focused upon this objective as Nehemiah was with his own. Tobiah had married into the family of Shechaniah, while his son married into the family of Meshullam, both prominent Jewish families. The conspirators used this status to correspond with the other nobles of Judah about the good actions of Tobiah and the words of Nehemiah.

The efforts of the enemy are continual. Even when we have completed a task, the work is not really finished. We find rest in knowing that we are in the will of God, not in the end of the work. After completing the ark and the ordeal of the flood, Noah relaxed and got drunk. After calling Israel to repentance and the ordeal of Mount Carmel, Elijah relaxed and ran from Ahab and Jezebel. But after building the walls and the ordeal of the opposition, Nehemiah continued with steadfastness and vigilance against his enemies.

There are two types of leaders. One is godly, mission-oriented, unintimidated, and proactive, while the other is reactive, gossiping, compromising, deceptive, bitter, opportunistic, and vindictive. Opposition from enemies and “friends” will always attend God’s work, but we must always rely on the strength of God even in the midst of danger or death. Death is not failure. Failure is when we leave our divine call unfinished.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/neh9-4

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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20

1 Cor. 2:14

Heb. 4:12; 5:14



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Nehemiah 6:10-19?

Review your memorized verse from Nehemiah 6:10-19.

DISCERNING THE PROPHETS

Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15, 16, NKJV). There you have it, the Prophet of all prophets, Jesus, said it. As aggravating and disconcerting as it may be, we are called in spiritual warfare to keep our guards up. We do it all the time, checking whether emails are spam, whether friend requests are bots, whether free offers are actually free (they never are!). Since we are digitally cautious and even more so when people show up at our literal front door, we should be more so when it comes to the spiritual world. But how? Jesus by the Holy Spirit gave us some principles to discern whether a person is receiving insight from God.

1. “He shall speak to them all that I command him” (Deuteronomy 18:18, NKJV).
2. “If they do not speak according to [the law and the testimony], it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20, NKJV).
3. “The word of the prophet comes to pass” (Jeremiah 28:9, NKJV).
4. “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:16, NABRE).
5. “He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. . . . He who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, NKJV).
6. “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, . . . they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20, 21, NKJV).
7. “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2, NKJV).

Why does this matter? Like Nehemiah had to face false prophets, the remnant will have to face false prophets again (Revelation 16:13; 19:20) as well as be identified as a people having the true spirit of prophecy (Revelation 12:17; 19:10). God does not consider this an elective course; this is a core requirement. Won’t you take another, closer, look at the Spirit of prophecy?



inVite

Meditate on Nehemiah 6:10–19 again and look for Jesus in the passage.



How did Jesus display the gift of discernment during His earthly ministry?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/neh9-6

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Review your memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

—————→
As you have studied this
week, what personal
applications have you been
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your school,
family, workplace, and church?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inversebible.org/neh9-7

HEATHEN PLOTS

“The whole power and policy of Satan have always been aimed at those who are zealously seeking to advance the cause and work of God. Though often baffled, he as often renews his assaults. But it is when he works in secret that he is most to be feared. The advocates of unpopular truth must expect opposition from its open enemies; this is often fierce and cruel, but it is far less dangerous than the secret enmity of those who profess to be serving God while at heart they are servants of Satan. While apparently uniting in the work of God, many are connected with his foes; and if in any way crossed in their plans or reproved for their sins, they court the favor of the enemies of truth, and open to them all the plans of God’s servants and the workings of his cause. Thus they place every advantage in the hands of those who use all their knowledge to hinder the work of God and injure his people. Thus these men of two minds and two purposes pretend to serve God, and then go over to the enemy and serve him, as best suits their inclination.

“Every device which the prince of darkness can suggest, will be employed to induce God’s servants to form a compromise with the agents of Satan. Repeated solicitations will come in to call us from duty; but, like Nehemiah, we should steadfastly reply, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.’ We have no time to seek the favor of the world, or even to defend ourselves from their misrepresentation and calumny. We have no time to lose in self-vindication. We should keep steadily at our work, and let that refute the falsehoods which malice may coin to our injury. Slanders will be multiplied if we stop to answer them. Should we allow our enemies to gain our friendship and sympathy, and thereby allure us from our post of duty; should we, by any unguarded act, expose the cause of God to reproach, and thus weaken the hands of the workers, we should bring upon our characters a stain not easily removed, and place a serious obstacle in the way of our own future usefulness.

“Those temptations are most dangerous which come from the professed servants of God, and from our friends. When persons who are uniting with the world, yet claiming great piety and love, counsel the faithful workers for God to be less zealous and more conservative, our answer must be an appeal to the word of God. When they plead for union with those who have been our determined opposers, we should fear and shun them as decidedly as did Nehemiah. Those who would lead away from the old landmarks to form a connection with the ungodly, can not be sent of heaven. Whatever may have been their former position, their present course tends to unsettle the faith of God’s people.

“Such counselors are prompted by Satan. They are time-servers. The testimonies, reproofs, and warnings of God’s servants are unpalatable to them, being a reproof to their worldly, pleasure-loving propensities. We should shun this class as resolutely as did Nehemiah.”¹

1. Ellen G. White, “Heathens Plots—No. 2,” Southern Watchman, May 24, 1904.



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Are you a Tobiah who talks, or are you a Nehemiah who walks?

How should you meet personal attacks upon your work and/or character?

How can you influence others to work for Christ in a positive way?

How can prayer strengthen courage?

Who are other false prophets? What lessons do you learn from them?

When has fear overshadowed your faith?

When has mystical awe overshadowed your faith?

How do we keep faith always before us, especially in front of fear and awe?

What is your relationship with the Spirit of Prophecy?