

Study Notes: Nehemiah 12:27-43
November 12, 2023: “Dedication and Declaration”
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Nehemiah 12:1-26 contains a list of the priests and Levites that served after the return to Jerusalem.

At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem — from the villages of the Netophathites, from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

- In the climactic moment of the book of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were dedicated with great celebration. Nehemiah brought together the Levites, and they led the people in songs of thanksgiving.
- The dedication began with the priests and the Levites purifying themselves, the people, the gates, and the walls. The purpose of this act was so that everyone and everything would be in a state of holiness, as they dedicated the walls (and themselves) to the Lord.
 - The Faithlife Study Bible gives insight into the process of purification, “The process of purification included ritual bathing and shaving, putting on clean garments, fasting, abstaining from sexual intercourse, and offering sacrifices (e.g., Exod 19:10, 14–15; Lev 11–15; Num 8:5–8).”

I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate. Hoshai and half the leaders of Judah followed them, along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zakkur, the son of Asaph, and his associates — Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani — with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the teacher of the Law led the procession. At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the site of David’s palace to the Water Gate on the east. The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people — past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped. The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, as well as the priests — Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with

their trumpets — and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer.

- For the dedication, Nehemiah split the people into two processions to walk around the city, which included leaders, choirs, and musicians. The worship followed the design of King David. The first group was led by Ezra and began by walking south. The second group was followed by Nehemiah, and moved in the opposite direction. When the groups met opposite of the temple, they gave thanks and went to the temple.
- The Faithlife Study Bible provides additional detail, “Each procession included the following: a thanksgiving choir (Neh 12:31, 38); a prominent layperson (Hoshaiah, v. 32; Nehemiah, v. 38); half of the lay leaders of Judah (vv. 32, 40); seven priests with trumpets (vv. 33–35, 41); a director of music (Zechariah, v. 35; Jezrahiah, v. 42); and eight Levites with musical instruments (vv. 36, 42).”

The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

- At the temple, the choirs were directed by Jezrahiah, and many sacrifices were offered. It was a day of great joy, with everyone singing and rejoicing. The sound of rejoicing was so loud, that it resounded far beyond the walls of the city.
- Nehemiah noted that it was God who was the source of the people’s joy. They recognized that this accomplishment had come by His hand.
- The New American Commentary helps us understand the application of this text to our lives, “Here as elsewhere in the Old Testament, thanksgiving and celebration were expressed through sacrifice. Although the type of sacrifice is different in New Testament worship, sacrifice is still important (Rom 12:1; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:15). If we love God, we must give ourselves and our goods to him. The joy that God gives is genuine and can best be experienced in fellowship with the community of God’s people. We should not be ashamed to be heard when we praise God.”