

Dedication of the Walls

Nehemiah 12

Commemoration: *Nehemiah 12:1-26*

Dedication Recognized

The time had come to glorify the LORD with the dedication of the walls. This was an important occasion that took place after much preparation. Before the account of the ceremony we find a list of men that proved themselves faithful (Psalm 112:6). It started with the priests and Levites that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. These men were remembered for their courage and conduct, because they were willing to return and work in Jerusalem. Seeing there are 22 priests mentioned, it's possible they held the positions established under David's direction (1 Chronicles 24:1-18). Little is known of these men, but they were remembered for their faithfulness to the LORD'S service. If nothing else could be said of us; that we were faithful should be enough. It's important to live so others see your dedication to God (Matthew 5:16).

Several of the faithful Levites were mentioned next, including Mattaniah who was in charge of thanksgiving. It was his responsibility to start the temple services with thanksgiving. After the Levites we're given a succession of high priests beginning with Jeshua, the high priest when the restoration started, and ends with Jaddua, who some believe is the same high priest that met Alexander the Great and showed him his place in the prophecy of Daniel.¹ If this is true, this account was entered in later, which is not a problem since the Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures (2 Peter 1:21). He was able to determine what was written and by whom. It is important to remember those that came before us, whom lived for the LORD and were willing to die for Him. Our service to God builds upon the labors of those faithful believers. We have the truth today because many remained dedicated to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's be grateful for the faithful believers that came before us.

Dedication Retained

The passage continues with the next generation of priests. They were the sons of the high priests that went with Zerubbabel and they served in the second temple. We find that the work of the LORD did not stop but continued through new men. There is also special consideration given to the Levites during Nehemiah's time. It appears these men were more dedicated than the priests. Why is this? Perhaps Eliashib badly influenced the others because of his friendship with Tobiah (Nehemiah 13:4-7). Whatever the case, the Levites remained faithful and their dedication to the LORD was not overlooked. The nation was blessed with men that loved God.

Chapter Outline

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¹ Flavius Josephus, "The Works of Flavius Josephus: Volume 3," (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1995) p. 144

Ceremony: Nehemiah 12:27-47

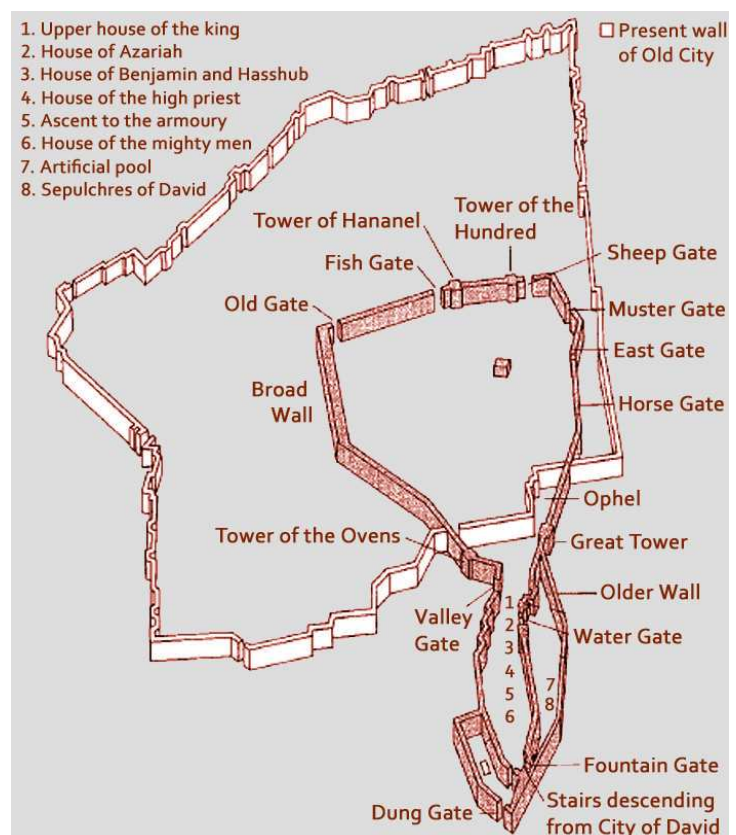
Devotion

Nehemiah determined to honor God by planning a dedication service. The LORD greatly blessed the people, allowing them to rebuild Jerusalem while providing for their needs and protection. There is no way the work could have been accomplished without the LORD (Psalm 90:17). Invitations were sent out across the land for the Levites to be part of the dedication. It was important for these men to attend because without the presence of leaders it's difficult to have a service. Their appearance would also encourage others to participate. We read of no excuses or complaining, but find these men faithfully attending the service. Other plans were set aside for this special meeting because they had an interest in the things of God (Psalms 25:4). This type of dedication is difficult to find today. Church services are often neglected for the pursuit of personal desires, whether it is entertainment, relaxation or something else. Evidently the things of God no longer interest many believers. This selfish attitude was not found amongst the Levites and singers, they were present at the ceremony.

Purification was the first issue addressed, and it included washings and abstinence from anything unclean. The Biblical example of sprinkling water was probably followed (Numbers 8:6,7,21; 19:9). This ceremony was a type of Christ and His blood (Hebrews 9:14). First, the Priests and Levites purified themselves (Isaiah 52:11). Leaders must be pure in order to direct others. The people were then purified. Nehemiah knew an impure group would hinder the service. The same is true today, with most problems in churches being due to impure members, those living in the flesh. Finally the walls were purified. This symbolic gesture reminded them to keep the city clean, both spiritually and physically. Failure to do this would imply a lack of devotion and interest in the LORD, as was the case before Nehemiah led in rebuilding the walls. Purification prepared the people to worship the LORD so they could be blessed (Psalm 51:2). Likewise we must be purified if we want God to bless (1 John 1:9).

Demonstration

Nehemiah, the governor, organized and directed the events of the day. Joining him were the other leaders of Israel, including Ezra, the Princes of Judah, the Priests, and the Levites. Together they glorified the LORD (1 Corinthians 10:31). Those involved in the ceremony were divided into two companies. Beginning at the Valley Gate, both groups marched on the walls giving thanks to God. Each company went a different direction and continued to travel until they met near the temple, where they went in together. It was a well coordinated effort with Nehemiah



and Ezra each leading a company. The grand scene encouraged the people to consider the rebuilt walls, which came from the ruins and according to their adversaries, were useless. They were reminded that with God anything is possible (Mark 10:27; Philippians 4:13).

The day was filled with celebration, with the people sacrificing and rejoicing with all their might. The Jews rejoiced together, families were involved, and they rejoiced loudly so they could be heard from a distance. On that day, they exalted the LORD before the world. Their joy was great because it was in the LORD their God (Romans 5:11). There were many reasons for them to be thankful. The walls were rebuilt, the city populated, and the people were safe. It had been about 150 years since this was the case in Israel. Singing went along with thanksgiving, with the people singing loudly and in unison. Without a doubt, there was enthusiasm for the LORD. Whenever we gather to serve God, it should be done with eager hearts seeking His glory.

*"God has indeed deserved our thanks. He never ceases to do us good. So also our thanks should have no end."
John Lange*

Direction

The final section of this chapter deals with Nehemiah establishing positions of leadership in Jerusalem. Since these men were already performing their duties, it's likely this made their offices official. Nehemiah returned things to how they were under David's leadership, doing his best to re-establish the city to its former glory. Treasures were assigned for the collection of offerings, the firstfruits, and tithes. The people rejoiced for the priests and Levites. Their work was recognized and their leadership was appreciated. This occurred because the men were faithful to their calling, they waited at their work – did not forsake or neglect it. It's important for men of God to be faithful and when they are we should be thankful for them (1 Corinthians 4:2). Singers and Porters were also given assignments; in particular they were to keep the Temple pure. This required the Porters to diligently guard the gates to prevent anyone that was ceremonially unclean from entering. If an unclean person happened to get by the Porters, the Singers who were charged with the business inside the temple would deal with them. Nehemiah directed the people to be purified then encouraged them to remain clean.

Trouble had come upon the Jews because of their failure to seek the LORD'S ways. They found God to be gracious and merciful, allowing them to return to the land to rebuild Jerusalem. It was important for them to recognize God with praise and to honor Him with their conduct. Those that follow God's direction will also know His blessings.

Questions for Consideration

How did Nehemiah prepare for the dedication?

Why was it necessary for the Levites to be present at the dedication?

How were the Levites directed to keep the ceremony?

Why was it important to have a dedication service?

Why was purification needed?

What officers were appointed on this day of the dedication of the wall?

What did the people have to be thankful for?

What can be learned from their dedication ceremony?

Why did the people rejoice for the priests and Levites?

What responsibility did the Porters have?

Points to Ponder

Are you a good example?

There were 22 priests mentioned and 20 had sons that followed the LORD. What a blessing that 20 priests would each raise a good son. It's a testimony to both the parent and the child. These men must have provided a good example for their sons to follow.

Who gets the glory?

Nehemiah honored God and not himself. This is opposite of most rulers that exalt themselves for personal accomplishments. Like many, they care more about impressing others instead of honoring God. Make sure you give God the glory.

Are you prepared?

After being purified they were able to focus on spiritual matters, which enabled them to glorify God. Take the time to prepare your heart for church services, by seeking the LORD in prayer. If you do not prepare, it implies you are not interested.

Are you joyful?

The joy of the LORD was their strength. The Jews remained poor and their city was still despised but they found joy in the LORD. Unlike worldly joy, true joy is unselfish because it focuses on God. Look to the LORD to find joy.

When are you thankful?

The Jews were thankful publicly. This was a public celebration, not just a quiet service. The entire nation was invited and those that lived in the area heard the celebration. It's good to thank God publicly.