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Nehemiah 12:27-47 **Dedication and Service**

Nehemiah 12:27-29 *And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps and lyres. And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; also from Beth-gigal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem.*

King David has organized the priests into 24 divisions. That meant there were two divisions of priests for each month of the year, which meant each priest would be on duty for two weeks every year in Jerusalem. The remaining weeks they would be in their own villages doing life in their own villages

Same for the Levites. By calling all of the Levites back to Jerusalem for this dedication ceremony, that also included the priests

Nehemiah 12:30 *and the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.*

“Purification” was serious preparation for worship

How do you prepare yourself and your family for corporate worship?

Nehemiah 12:31-37 *Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. And after them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph: and his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. At the Fountain Gate they went up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.*

Nehemiah 4:3 *Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building - if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall.”*

Nehemiah directs all the people to worship and give thanks to God by everyone standing ON the wall. This may have been in response to the taunts from their enemies

What is our response to the taunts that Jesus and His Church get from the current culture?

Nehemiah also brought all of the leaders of Jerusalem, even those who had not participated in the building project (Nehemiah 3:5) because they thought the work was beneath them

2 choirs relates back to Deuteronomy 27, where Moses is giving the people his final words before he dies. He tells them that after they cross the Jordan River into the land God had promised and would give to them, they were to form two groups and stand on two different mountains opposite each other

6 of the tribes were on Mount Gerizim, and they proclaimed the blessings if the Covenant with God was kept. The other 6 tribes were on Mount Ebal, and they proclaimed the curses that would come by not keeping the Covenant

Nehemiah probably remembered this, and instituted this format

This time for worship, like antiphonal choirs

But the connection between worship and keeping the Covenant cannot be missed

What's my point? We can go through the religious motions, but we cannot truly worship Jesus on Sundays, if we blow Him off the rest of the week

Did you notice that Ezra, the great teacher of God's Law in that time is the one who leads this choir in worship?

Teaching and hearing God's Word should, it must result in worship

That is why we sing most of our songs and celebrate communion after the sermon

Nehemiah 12:38-39 *the other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard.*

These groups are essentially being led by the "non-professionals"

Then it appears both groups (choirs) climb down from their locations on the wall, and together go to the Temple...

Nehemiah 12:40-43 *So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. And they offered great sacrifices that day and*

rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

These men led their families to also worship and celebrate God and what He had done for them in the construction of the wall

They are essentially celebrating their security in God, and how God's Name was more accurately, more respectfully displayed

The word "rejoice" as a response has several motivations

Joy over the event itself, like being joyful at Christmas time

Joy that is grounded in the character and activity of God

Joy over putting their past behind them, and the anticipation of future salvation and permanent restoration

Nehemiah 12:44 *On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered.*

Part of the peoples' worship was providing for the leaders who led them in worship

The people "rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered"

It could mean they joined in with the leaders for worship

It could also mean they rejoiced that God had provided them with leaders

Nehemiah 12:45-46 *And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.*

Related back to the short genealogy in verse 37, the people returned to the songs that Asaph had written back in King David's time

They did not revert to a kind of worship that suited them in their present day

They returned to worship that had been prescribed for them centuries ago

They believed, for once, that worship had already been prescribed for them by God

And they believed they had neglected worship, and thus joyfully reinstated worship of God

They were led to remember their spiritual heritage

Nehemiah 12:47 *And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.*

The people of Judah had also neglected caring for their leaders, so they did so
And the leaders also participated in giving, in tithing themselves

Obedience to God's Word and sacrificial generosity were signs of spiritual health and maturity - just like they are today!

Deuteronomy 12:10-12 *But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, then to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.*

Psalm 48 *A Song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress. For behold, the kings assembled; they came on together. As soon as they saw it they were astounded; they were in panic; they took to flight. Trembling they took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor. By the east wind you shattered the ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, which God will establish forever.*

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness. Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments! Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever.