

### Dedication of the Wall

#### Nehemiah 12

Nehemiah 12:27-47 - *“Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. <sup>28</sup> And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, <sup>29</sup> from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> The priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall.*

*<sup>31</sup> So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. <sup>32</sup> After them went Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah, <sup>33</sup> and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, <sup>35</sup> and some of the priests' sons with trumpets—Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, <sup>36</sup> and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. Ezra the scribe went before them. <sup>37</sup> By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water Gate eastward.*

*<sup>38</sup> The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall, <sup>39</sup> and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison.*

*<sup>40</sup> So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me; <sup>41</sup> and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; <sup>42</sup> also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. <sup>43</sup> Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.*

*<sup>44</sup> At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites. <sup>45</sup> They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the musicians and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon. <sup>46</sup> For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. <sup>47</sup> So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the musicians and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.”*

## Background Notes

The first half of Nehemiah 12 provided a listing of the priests and the Levites who returned from the captivity under the leadership of Zerubbabel, back in 538BC, and a listing of the priest and Levites who served from that time to Nehemiah's time. About 100 years passed between the first return under Zerubbabel and Nehemiah's return.

The dedication of the wall was a time of great rejoicing. Verse 43: *"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. The women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off."* God gave the people of Jerusalem great joy. Their rejoicing was so loud that the sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away!

Nehemiah appointed two large groups of people to walk around the city on top of the new wall (v31). Ezra led one group, and they walked counterclockwise on the wall. Nehemiah led the other group, and they went clockwise. Each group consisted of a thanksgiving choir, with singers from all over the land, priests with trumpets, and those who played musical instruments - perhaps most of the people. In addition, each group had a number of leaders of the people.

The two groups went around the wall in opposite directions, and then they all met in the Temple area (v40). They joined in the courtyard of the Temple and celebrated together, with *"great sacrifices"* being offered (v43). It was a wonderful, God-honoring time of dedication and rejoicing.

By the way, you can still walk around the Old City of Jerusalem on top of the walls. However, when you walk on the walls today, you're not walking on the walls that Nehemiah built. A lot of rebuilding has taken place over the centuries since then, as different people and nations ruled Jerusalem.

The wall that Nehemiah built was in place from the intertestamental period up to the time of our Lord. Herod the Great then expanded Jerusalem; he did a lot of rebuilding and new wall building. A lot of Herod's construction was destroyed in 70AD, when the Romans conquered Jerusalem and devastated the city and the Temple. Later, during the Crusader period, some rebuilding took place. Finally, the Turks did a lot of repair and wall building. So when you walk on top of the walls around the Old City of Jerusalem today, you're really walking on Turkish walls - some parts from the 1500s AD.

However, you can still see a section of the wall that Nehemiah built, and a section of the "Broad Wall" (v38) from King Hezekiah's time. When you walk on the wall at the southeast corner of the Old City of Jerusalem, you're actually walking on part of the wall whose foundations go back to Nehemiah, and even further back to Solomon's day. On that section you can walk on wall that is built upon 3000-year-old foundations!

## **Doctrinal Point**

### **God is pleased when we dedicate our projects to Him.**

When they dedicated the walls, God was pleased. They *“rejoiced for God had made them rejoice with great joy”* (v43). God is pleased when we dedicate our projects to Him.

I use the word “project,” because everything we do is a “project.” As building a wall is a project, so buying a house is a project, buying a new car is a project, starting a business is a project, getting involved in a hobby or sport is a project, starting a ministry is a project. The wall was a project. They dedicated it, and God approved. It almost seems that God was extra pleased - not just because the wall is built, but also because the people dedicated the wall to the glory of God.

In the same way, God is pleased when we honor Him in the purchase of our homes, and starting businesses, and the use of our time and energies in useful hobbies or sports. I think He’s extra pleased if we dedicate these things to the Lord.

You might say that as a Christian you want to serve the Lord, and you want to bring glory to God in everything you do, but I think He is extra pleased when we actually dedicate our projects – our homes, our cars, our ministries - to Him. We don’t have to go through some official ceremony, as Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem did. They actually purified themselves and purified the gates and the wall (v30). We don’t have to have an official ceremony, and we don’t need to have thanksgiving choirs walk around the house – although those things certainly wouldn’t be wrong! But a specific prayer of dedication would be biblical, and it would be pleasing to the Lord. God is pleased when we dedicate our projects to the Lord.

## **Practical Application**

### **Let’s dedicate our projects to the Lord - specifically.**

Let’s take our homes for example. Dads and Moms, gather your family around you in the living room. Perhaps you might consider inviting extended family members or friends to the dedication of your home.

Then pray, giving the home to God for His use and His honor. Maybe each family member could pray. “Lord, we want to use this house for your glory; we dedicate it to You.” If you haven’t done it before, do it today. It’s biblical!

But remember – don’t give your home to God if you don’t really mean it. Don’t do it if you are just going through the motions or you think it’s a nice gesture. Only do it if you really mean it, because God may take you up on that. He may want to use that home in some ways you don’t expect! For example, if the Lord wanted to use your home for your church’s lively teen gatherings, would you be willing?

One summer our entire family was involved in camp ministry, and we heard that a missionary family needed a home for the summer. We had dedicated our home when we moved in – and now the Lord was asking us to keep our promise! So we allowed the missionary family to stay in our home. They had small children, and the house suffered some wear and tear - but the home was used for the glory of God.

Dedicate the project of buying a new car to the Lord. Ask God for wisdom. Then dedicate the vehicle to Him, for His use. If a family needs a ride to church – your car is ready and available for the Lord to use! Our family van ferried large groups of high school students to youth gatherings and retreats, and weekly to “Teen Breakfast Club” - Young Life’s evangelistic outreach. It ended its days of service for the Lord as a heavily used vehicle at a Christian camp!

Dedicate all your projects to the Lord - whether it’s homes, cars, things, activities - even sports! How can you dedicate a sport to the Lord? Suppose you like skiing. You give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity to enjoy the amazing beauty of the mountains, and you give glory to God for His creation and handiwork. More than that, if you dedicate your skiing to the Lord, you’ll seek to introduce others to Christ as you meet them. When you ride a chairlift up the mountain with a stranger sitting next to you, you have a captive audience. I think I’ve done more witnessing while skiing than in any other sport!

Form a softball team, or a “club” for hikers or mountain bikers, or a tennis group. These groups can provide fellowship with believers and opportunities to witness to seekers. When you dedicate a sport to the Lord, you enjoy the sport more. Do that with everything – homes, cars, music, sports. We can dedicate all these things to the Lord.

Dedicating all our projects to the Lord is not only biblical - it pleases the heart of God. And it brings joy to our hearts, too! *“God made them rejoice with great joy” (v43)*. Let’s dedicate our projects to the Lord!