

The Dedication Service – Nehemiah 12:27-47

I. Introduction:

- A. I am going to skip over what could potentially be an interesting lesson from **chapter 11**.
1. I am skipping it because I have enough ignorance and skill to turn make it very un-interesting and tedious.
 2. But here is a quick synopsis.
- B. Scattered across **Nehemiah 11** are hints of the organization of Judah, Jerusalem and the temple services.
1. **Verse 9** names **Jerusalem's overseer** and his **assistant** – whatever they were – is that governor????
 2. **Verse 19** speaks of the **porters** and **gate-keepers** of the city.
 3. **Verse 3** tells us that there were **chief men** living in the **provinces**. How were they chiefs????
 4. And **Verse 14** names a few **"mighty men of valor"** – which may, or may not, indicate some sort of **militia**.
- C. And when it comes to the temple, we have the names of many priests and Levites.
1. **Verse 11** says that Seraiah was the **ruler** of the temple, whatever that office might have entailed.
 2. But **verse 16** tells us two Levites had the **oversight** of the **OUTWARD business** of the temple.
 - a. Were they in charge over **"the brethren who did the work of God's house"** (**verse 12**) and if so what exactly was that?
 - b. I have 5 or 6 books whose theme is the temple or the tabernacle and their ministry, but they don't explain any of this.
 3. We are told about people who had the responsibility of **singing** and **thanksgiving** – **verses 17, 22** and **23**.
 4. I wish I knew more about **Mattaniah** whose ministry was to **"begin the thanksgiving in prayer"** – **verse 17**.
 5. **Chapter 12** adds people who had the responsibility of **"watching"** the **gates of the temple**.
- D. Most of this is a mystery to me, and I'm reasonably sure that I couldn't edify you very much in examining it.
1. So let's move on to **chapter 12**.
 2. I'm not going to publically read the first 26 verses, but I have read them to myself several times.
 3. They contain a list of priests and Levites, sometimes describing some of their responsibilities.
 4. Feel free to read them to yourselves, making sure that you pronounce all their names correctly.
- E. What I would like to do this evening is make a quick summary of the rest of the chapter.
1. It describes the dedication service of the city wall.
 2. Obviously it was something which didn't happen very often, but there are some principles worthy of our consideration.

II. Let's begin by looking at the dedication service itself.

- A. There are **two Hebrew words** – the forms of which are translated **"dedicate"** and **"dedication."**
1. One, we might say, is more holy, or spiritual, than the other.
 2. That word **"qadash"** (**kaw-dash'**) is translated **"to sanctify"** ten times more often than it is **"to dedicate."**
 3. Ours is the second word, and it literally speaks of **"pressing in."**
 4. The word could be used to speak of dedicating anything to a special purpose.
 5. After tithing, someone might dedicate, or set aside, the next 10% of his income to a savings account.
 6. Another person might dedicate a section of his back yard to be used as a vegetable garden.
 7. The dedication of this wall, uses **that** word, for whatever that information is worth.
- B. Let's just read this scripture, making a few comments as we go along.
1. **Verse 27** – **"And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem."**

2. This dedication included **thanksgiving**, and to Whom was the thanks given?
 - a. I would like to say that the thanks was given to God, but we aren't actually told.
 - b. It was certainly the Lord who enabled the workers, surrounding them with some degree of safety.
 - c. But I would hope that the people who benefitted from the blessings of that wall, also gave their thanks to the men who did the work.
 - d. It gives me joy to hear you thank Judy, Rachel & Shelly for playing the instruments in our song services.
 - e. Some of them, if not all three, sometimes get really stressed, and your encouragement is a help.
3. And speaking of music, there was lots of singing and music in this special service in Nehemiah.

C. Verse 31 – *“Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate:*

1. *And after them went Hoshaiiah, and half of the princes of Judah, And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,*
2. *And certain of the priests' sons with trumpets; namely, 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: And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them.”*
3. Notice that among the many things the King of Persia had given to Ezra and the others were some of the musical instruments which had been made during the days of King David.
4. Perhaps some of them had even been made by David himself.
5. *“And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward.*
 - a. *And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;*
 - b. *And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate.*
6. *So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:*
 - a. *& the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, & Hananiah, with trumpets;*
 - b. *And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer.”*

D. Try to imagine trumpeters on the wall, beginning at one point then walking in opposite directions, accompanied by singers and other musicians.

1. Were they trying to synchronize their playing so that it was one city-wide sacred concert?
2. Or did it turn into a glorious cacophony of various tunes or no specific tune at all?
3. As we all know different sounds, and different kinds of music, produce different emotional responses.
4. I envision this music as the kind which uplifts, bringing smiles to hearts as well as faces.

E. In addition to the music, there were sacrifices and proper preparation for those sacrifices.

1. **Verse 30** – *“The priests & the Levites purified **themselves**, & purified the people, & the gates, & the wall.”*
2. For the priests and Levites the purification probably included ceremonial cleansings with water.
3. I don't know if there was any blood of the red heifer available, but if there was they might have used it.
4. Most likely this cleansing involved even more humble confessions of sin and statements of repentance.
5. After that, was it water which was sprinkled on sections of the wall and on the various gates?
6. How often along the wall did this go? We aren't given enough information to make any speculation.

F. But there is no speculation when we say there were **sacrifices**.

1. **Verse 43** – *“That day they offered **GREAT** sacrifices, & rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy. Also the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.”*
2. In addition to the regular morning sacrifice that day, there were apparently other blood sacrifices.

3. Some of these may have been sin offerings for the priests and Levites, but most of them were likely “*peace*” and “*thank*” offerings. And there were many of them.
4. They were still blood sacrifices, but they were not for sin – rather they were out of joy.
5. Jehovah loves offerings celebrating “*peace*” as much as He does offerings for atonement.
6. He loves **our** offerings even after the great sacrifice our Saviour has made to save us.
7. And notice that the people’s great sacrifices were coupled to God’s blessing of great joy.
8. We sing a hymn which says, “*There is joy in serving Jesus.*”
9. The scripture teaches, “*There is GREAT joy in serving Jesus.*”

- G. Many of the gifts given to the Lord that day were used to provide for the future service of Temple.
1. Elsewhere the Bible calls these “*meat offerings,*” but they didn’t include flesh – they were “*food offerings*” of mostly grain and fruit.
 2. They made up much of the people’s support of the priests and Levites.
 3. **Verse 44** – “*And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.*”

III. Now for some points of application in regard to this dedication service.

- A. Unlike Roman Catholics and some others, Baptists generally don’t make much of dedication services.
1. I wasn’t here when you moved into this building, and I don’t know if there was a dedication service.
 2. Since then there have been one or two occasions when parents brought their children forward, asking me to pray for God’s blessings on them, as they dedicated those children and themselves to God’s service.
 3. I have mixed emotions about that sort of thing, because it comes dangerously close to infant baptism.
- B. But let me say this: shouldn’t everything God gives to the Christian be dedicated to His service?
1. The wall of Jerusalem was a secular structure – there was no religious significance in it.
 2. But Nehemiah didn’t say that this was a “*qadash*” (*kaw-dash*) of the wall – it wasn’t being made “*holy.*”
 3. Nevertheless, it **was** being given to God.
- C. Couldn’t I make a **comparison** between **the wall** surrounding Jerusalem and the **skin of our bodies**?
1. “*Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your BODY, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*”
 2. “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*”
 3. Your eyes, your tongue, your hands and feet, and even your skin, have been bought by the sacrifice of Christ as much as your soul.
 4. Shouldn’t they all be dedicated to God’s service and glory?
- D. Does your car belong to the Lord? Your house? They should.
1. When you get out of bed, isn’t it true that the Lord has given you at least part of another day?
 2. Shouldn’t that day be dedicated to the God who has given it to you?
 3. If you have a job – employment – remember that it is by God’s grace.
 4. If you can’t dedicate your labor to the Lord in that job, maybe you should look for new employment.
 5. When you eat your lunch, you usually thank the Lord, but couldn’t you also dedicate that food to His use?
 6. Your shoes, your clothes, your jacket on a cold evening should be considered God’s gifts, and as such should be given back to Him in their use.
 7. Everything – everything – we have should be dedicated to God.
 8. If it cannot be, then it is likely sinful and should be discarded.

- E. One of the things we see in Nehemiah's dedication was ***the joy of the people***.
1. On this occasion it brought the nation and the city together – it unified all the various citizens and strata of the community.
 2. That dedication service reminded them all of God's corporate blessing, producing genuine national thanksgiving.
 3. It was a joyful day.
 4. And under those circumstances it was a spiritual day – it was a revival meeting of sorts.
 5. The city was a step closer to Jehovah when all the parts of this dedication service came together – the sacrifices, the music, the thanksgiving and the joy.
 6. Similarly, when someone comes forward in a church service, declaring his love to the Lord and his promise to serve Him with his life, it should bring that congregation to its feet in united joy.
- F. Austin and I were talking about this the other day.
1. God's blessings often have a ripple effect.
 2. When one person is edified by a message, getting excited about what he has heard, he may ignite something similar in one or two others as he recounts the lesson.
 3. When someone is baptized, two or three others may be convicted about their identification with the Saviour.
 4. When someone is saved, it may excite a couple older saints to be more diligent in their witness.
 5. This dedication of the wall, excited the people of the city, and they encouraged the villagers to remain faithful to the Lord.
- G. What sort of eternal effect might you create, if others could see your heart-felt dedication to the Lord?
1. It should ignite earthly joy which could extend itself into eternity.
 2. Even angels get excited about Christians who set themselves aside for the service and glory of their Saviour.
 3. There ought to be good things which come out true dedication and godly dedication services.