

Nehemiah 12:22-23; 44-47 – Division of Labor in Christ’s Kingdom

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Clarke, Barnes, Delitzsch, Poole, Gill, Trapp, Geneva, JFB, Handfuls, Expositors, Armstrong, Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: Many people see logistics as one of the most difficult, most boring occupations in the world. I am one of those! But **statistics and order are essential for success.**

Example: If you ever watch **cargo planes** being loaded you will see it is essential the **load is stable** and **locked** in position so it doesn’t shift during take-offs and landings. **It also has to be balanced from side to side and front to back** and **not too heavy**. One little mistake, as has happened a number of times, those planes come falling out of the sky. Once a huge jumbo jet fell out of the sky because the strappers did not strap the load enough. Another time the fuelers confused liters for gallons, though there were only minor injuries. Another time the pilots did not calculate correctly the weight of the plane and didn’t give it enough thrust so it didn’t take off. Disaster.

The same thing is true in the church, except that order in the church is even more essential. After all, failure in the church leads to eternal consequences- even eternity in hell. So see today how Nehemiah made sure the church was well-organized to continue its kingdom building work, even as they waited for Messiah to come.

Our headings are:

Account of the Leaders

Activities of the Leaders

Allowance for the Leaders

Our goals are: **That you will recognize the benefit of the church being well-organized so the kingdom of Christ can come and God can be properly worshipped.**

Account of the Leaders

22 During the reign of Darius the Persian, **a record was also kept of the Levites and priests** who had been **heads of their fathers’ houses** in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua. 23 The sons of Levi, the heads of the fathers’ houses until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, **were written in the book of the chronicles.**

1. During the reign of Darius, the Persian emperor, a record was kept of the Levites, the priests, and their family line.

I believe this was Dairus I, The Great, who ruled from 522BC – 486BC. . . .but others believe it was Darius II or Darius III. The disagreement comes because the language seems to suggest that until Eliashib, the records were only kept in the book of the chronicles and from Eliashib (which means a later emperor) it was kept separately. **But I believe there were 2 records kept!** Accepting there were 2 records of the same list adds weight to my argument that it is important to have good records. **The old records could be cross-referenced with the new records in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua for accuracy.** (The Jews were noted for being very precise in their recording of details.)

2. Why was keeping his record so important?

There was a solid record of who should be priest and who should not be priest. **No one could force his way into office. No one could dodge his duty.**

3. Lessons:

a. You have to be able prove those who were fit for ministry by virtue of their specific calls by God.

There are too many self-appointed men in ministry. It was joked about that many Baptist congregations in the South were formed when one man took a bunch of members away and made himself a pastor. But that is no joke. **Self-appointment is rebellion.** There are about 60 Tamil congregations in the GTA – many formed by fights and self-appointments. God requires and inward and outward call!

b. God chooses leaders by different means today, but he is still the only one who calls them.

c. Churches that don’t have membership (or are lacking in organization) don’t understand the importance of their work. The church needs to know who are members. They have to work together. They have to hold each other accountable. **They must keep good personnel and financial accounts.**

d. Those who refuse to be members of a church don’t understand the importance of their work.

They want to build the Savior’s kingdom in their own way.

Activities of the Leaders

44 And at the same time some were **appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for**

the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; **for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.**

1. Some of the leaders were appointed to watch the storehouses in which the offerings were stored.

These offerings included the **firstfruits of the field...plants and animals...and the tithes.**

They would then transport these things (no e-transfers back then), and then secure them. Remember their earlier vows?

Nehemiah 10:35 And **we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits** of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the LORD; 36 to **bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle**, as it is written in the Law, and the **firstborn of our herds and our flocks**, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; 37 to **bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil**, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to **bring the tithes of our land to the Levites**, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities.

45 **Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God** and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son.

46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were **chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise** and **thanksgiving to God.**

2. Some were singers, leading or representing the congregation before God.

Verse 46 details some of the work of the singers.

They sang songs of **praise to God for who he was.**

They sang songs of **thanksgiving to God for what he had done.**

3. Some were gatekeepers (porters).

These **made sure nothing unclean was brought into the house of God.**

They made **sure no one who was ceremonially unclean entered God's house.**

This meant **they had to be clean themselves!**

They followed the guidance of kings David and Solomon.

4. The work of the Levites and priests was done so well, the people rejoiced in what the Levites and priests said and rejoiced in what they experienced from the Levites and priests!

They were **instructed, edified, comforted, and corrected.** No wonder they rejoiced!

5. Lessons:

a. If you don't have membership, there can be no discipline, one of the principal marks of the church. Discipline is essential.

b. Don't take over other people's jobs. That is not helping them. That is not good for you.

c. Thank God when you hear a good sermon. Thank God when you are nourished by the sacraments. Thank God when you see someone placed under discipline and when they repent.

d. The job of the minister is not to tickle the ears of the people but to speak God's truth to instruct, edify, comfort, and correct them. When this happens, God's children will rejoice.

e. How many jobs do you know require that the person's heart be clean in order to be able to do it? Pray deeply for your deacons, elders and pastors.

Allowance for the Leaders

47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah **all Israel** gave the **portions for the singers and the gatekeepers**, a portion for each day. They also consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron.

1. During the time the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel and during the time when the walls were repaired by Nehemiah, the people of God gave their tithes and offerings to God.

Zerubbabel became governor soon after Judah was sent back by King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian empire. **Nehemiah came later** after things fell apart some years later. Chapter 13.

2. “All Israel!” meant people from every class contributed with wealth and work for the temple!

3. There was sufficient tithes for the Levites and the priests to do the work they were called to do.

They had enough for their private needs and they had enough for the public needs, as making sacrifices.

4. Special mention is made of the singers and gatekeepers; these lower positions were also provided for.

5. The Jews continued to consecrated holy things for the Levites and the priests to use.

What are consecrated things? These refer to the tithes and offerings. These things were given to God so they were considered sacred, specially **dedicated to the worship of God**. They did not have to consecrate things they fed their children or their animals, but they consecrated things used to worship God.

6. Lessons:

a. The church will not survive without proper provision by God’s people for God’s work. There will be no preaching, no missionaries going out, no help for the poor, and no place to physically gather to worship. And remember, the focus is worship, the worship of Yahweh!

b. Finances is only one form or provision. You provide encouragement. You provide personal involvement. You provide prayer. You provide rebuke. You provide your presence! All essential things!

c. Spiritual work must be done with care, patience, and seriousness, so don’t begrudge those who are paid for doing this work. Those who penny-pinch will get a penny-pinch reward.

d. A few hundred years ago a commentator wrote about how the congregation cared for the minister: Men deal by them as carriers do by their horses, lay heavy burdens upon them, and then hang bells about their necks... What a shame! Sadly, **this continues today**. Also, church facilities, hymnals, Bibles, books, teaching materials can all be ignored while people have an abundance of wealth! It should not be so! Avoid those people! Thank God it is good here!

Conclusion:

The Jews **kept good, multiple records to make sure the right people were in the right positions**. The Jews then **made sure all persons fulfilled their different roles to make sure worship of God was done and done properly**. The **costs of all this were borne by the people**, all of them.

Beloved in the Lord:

1. A well-organized church will have faithful preaching, will be passionate for learning and growing, will have a desire to know more of the Savior, will be filled with joy, and will ultimately become stronger. Yes, the joy of the Lord will be your strength.

2. A well-organized church will then be more passionate in worship. In fact, worship of Yahweh is the greatest achievement in a man’s life! A boy or girl could grow up to be the most famous or most important person in the world, but if he or she doesn’t worship, his or her life is wasted! Remember that, boys and girls.

3. A well-organized church will reach the lost for Jesus Christ. It won’t penny-pinch! It knows the value of the soul – and shows it when a sinner repents. You will welcome the stranger. You will teach him.

Finally: If you want to be a part of a well-organized church and worship Yahweh as you should, ask God for the work of Christ to be put into your account. He will do it, guaranteed.