

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/2/11

Series: “Facing the Past, Moving Ahead for God’s Honor: Nehemiah”

Current study: Nehemiah 12:27-47 “The Dedication of the Wall”

We’re nearing the end of the book of Nehemiah. It’s been a thrilling journey to see the faithfulness of God in action in the lives of His people in the 5th century B.C. The story pertains to the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem?

Q: What had happened to the wall in 586 B.C.?

Q: Why was this wall no “ordinary” wall? What was so special about it?

The Wall in Nehemiah...

The Wall begun – 2:18

The Wall completed – 6:15

The Wall dedicated – 12:27ff.

It’s interesting to note how the book of Nehemiah is laid out. There’s a five+ chapter break between the completion of the wall and the record of its dedication. Why? In part to illustrate that the wall was a means to an end. Finishing the wall project wasn’t the end. The wall wasn’t a relic to be idolized. It was feature that accomplished a function.

Once the wall was in place, the city needed people to dwell there. That’s one of the things the intervening chapters develop—how Nehemiah took action to repopulate the city.

But it needed more than people. It needed people who would center their lives around God and His Word. That’s what chapters 8-10 were all about—an event in which the people gathered to hear God’s Word and responded to it by saying, “Yes, we’ll do it.”

But you can have a wall, and a city full of people—even people full of resolve to obey God’s Word—and there’s still something missing. What’s that? It takes more than resolve for sinners to live in relationship with a holy God. What else is needed? It’s what the first 26 verses are about. Sinners need a *mediator* in order to approach a holy God.

God gave the Israelites the priesthood. Nehemiah lists the names of the priests in his day in chapter 12. The point is vital. You can have a temple, the house of God. But without a mediator a sinner cannot approach God.

Discuss: Do we have a priest today? Yes, His name is Jesus! (see the book of Hebrews)
Now we’re ready to dedicate the wall!

The Dedication of the Wall

I. The Participants in the Dedication (27-30)

A. Who participated?

The text mentions several groups...

1. *The Levites were sought out (27).*

Q: From where?

2. *The singers were brought (28).*

Q: From where?

3. *The priests were there (30).*

4. *The people were there, too (30)*

B. What did they do?

1. The Levites made music (27).

How? In two ways...

- They celebrated with songs of thanksgiving (27).
Maybe Psalm 48, which celebrates God's care for Zion
Maybe Psalm 66 or Psalm 75...
- They celebrated with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres.

2. The priests and Levites purified themselves (30).

3. Then the priests and Levites purified the people, the gates, and the wall (30).

God gave the Levites the task of performing rites of ritual purification (Lev 4:12). These acts, of course, didn't make any intrinsic changes to the objects purified, but did teach the Israelites about the subject of *holiness*. How so?

II. The Procedure in the Dedication (31-47)

A. Nehemiah involved the leaders of Judah (31).

Q: Where did the leaders go? *On* the wall. Why is that significant? They built this wall! By going up on it they're showing their confidence in the quality of their workmanship.

B. Nehemiah assigned two choirs to lead the way (31b).

Note they were "large."

Q: What was the primary purpose for the choirs? Verse 31, "to give thanks."

1. There was Choir #1 (31-37).

- It moved counter-clockwise toward the Dung Gate (31).
- Hoshaiah and half the leaders followed them (32-36).
- Some priests used trumpets (35).
- Others had different musical instruments (36).
- Ezra led the procession (36).
- The route of the procession is given (37).

See: Map

- It stopped at the Water Gate.

2. There was Choir #2 (38-39).

- It moved clockwise, in the opposite direction (38).
- Nehemiah followed this choir.
Remember, Ezra led the other group.
- The other half of the people followed, too.
- The route of the procession is given (39).

See Map again.

- It stopped at the Gate of the Guard.

Observation: The choirs did more than sing. They *led* God's people in giving thanks.

Think of the lesson contained. What can we learn here about the purpose of music participants in church worship services today? There's a difference between performing music and ministering music. What is it?

C. The procession went to the House of God (40-43).

1. *The choirs sang (42).*

Note there was *one* director for both choirs once they arrived at the temple. Who was it?

2. *They offered great sacrifices (43).*

3. *They rejoiced (43).*

Note: The word “rejoice” or a variant of it appears four times here... God wants us to rejoice when we worship Him!

D. Men were appointed to collect offerings (44-47).

1. *They collected contributions, firstfruits, and tithes (44).*

Q: From whom?

Q: What did they do with the offerings once collected...

2. *They put them in the storerooms (44b).*

Q: Where did they learn to do this? In the “Law”

3. *They used the offerings to care for the needs of the priests, Levites, and others (45-47).*

Q: Why? What did these people do according to the beginning of verse 45? They “performed the service of their God...”

The Significance:

What’s the point of this episode? What should we learn from this? I’ll mention two lessons...

1. *When God enables us to do something, the appropriate response is to thank Him.*

2. *We mustn’t get so wrapped up in a project that we forget the purpose.*

The wall was a means to an end. A key question...

Q: Where did the procession end? At the House of God

Discuss: Why is that significant?