

Nehemiah 12:1-43 – The Wall Dedication

In chapter 6, the wall was completed in 52 days. It was completed on the 25th day of the 6th month. That didn't leave a lot of time for the people to return home, get some affairs in order and return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Booths. During the seventh month they listened to God's Word, repented, worshiped and rejoiced. As a result of listening to God's Word read and explained, they committed themselves to following the Law of God. Chapter 11 dealt with populating Jerusalem with a tithe of people. The chronological placement of the events of chapter 12 are debated. We can all agree that after rebuilding the wall, it was time to dedicate the wall and celebrate how God had protected them and prospered them in the rebuilding project.

Read Nehemiah 12:1-26 on your own.

In verses 1-7, Nehemiah recorded the names of the men who were "chiefs of the priests" during the time of the return of the first exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The names don't match the list in Nehemiah 7:39-42. In Verses 8-9, Nehemiah recorded the names of the Levites during the time of the return of the first exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The names of Jeshua, and Kadmiel are also found in Nehemiah 7:43. This list appears to also include the singers who were in charge of the "songs of thanksgiving". (12:1-9)

Verses 10-11 give us the line of chief priests from the time of the first exiles' return beginning with Jeshua. Eliashib was the chief priest during the time of Nehemiah. These chief priests spanned six generations from 538 BC to sometime after 400 BC. (12:10-11)

Verses 12-21 seem to give a list of priests who were descendants of the priests listed in verses 1-7. The names are the same or have slight variations. Only Hattush is missing in this list compared to verses 1-7. (12:12-21)

Verses 22-26 give further information about the priests and Levites who lived just before the time of Nehemiah through the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. Priests and Levites were registered. It is not certain which Darius, I II or III, is meant in verse 22. F. Charles Fensham says that the "Book of the Chronicles" was an archival document kept in the temple and not the Biblical Chronicles. The translations having "Book of the Chronicles" capitalized imply that this was the Biblical book. Other translations imply that it was not the Biblical book but a non-Biblical record. Verse 24 mentions Levites who were "to praise and to give thanks according to the commandment of David". The gatekeepers mentioned were probably people who served at the temple gates and not the gates of the wall of Jerusalem. (12:22-26)

Read Nehemiah 12:27-30.

According to verse 27, how was the dedication of the wall to be celebrated? Where were the Levites living? Where were the singers living? (12:27-29)

What was the target of the priests and Levites purification? What is the significance of the order? (12:30)

Read Nehemiah 12:31-37.

Who went up on the wall? Do you think this may have been in response to Tobiah's mocking found in Nehemiah 3:3? (12:31-36)

There were two "great choirs" which participated in the wall dedication and celebration. What else was used to celebrate the completion of the wall? (12:31-36)

Who led the procession that went south to the Dung Gate and then headed north along the east wall? The Water Gate was mentioned as one of the gates on the eastern wall in chapter 3. Where else in Nehemiah was the Water Gate mentioned? See Nehemiah 8:1,3,16. (12:36-37)

Read Nehemiah 12:38-43.

The second choir went north. The choir led the way and Nehemiah and others followed. What did the choir do? The departure point for both processions was probably the Valley Gate near the middle of the western wall. The second procession went north along the western wall and then went along the northern wall and finally south along the eastern wall. Where did they stop? The Gate of the Guard was not mentioned in chapter 3. A different name may have been used in chapter 3. It may have been the Muster Gate which was between the Sheep Gate and the East Gate. Also, it may have been a previously unmentioned gate between the East Gate and the Water Gate. (12:38-39)

Who went into the temple area? Were instruments allowed in the temple area? In verse 42, what songs do you think the singers sang? What else did they do in the temple area? (12:40-43)

Why were the people so joyful? Who rejoiced besides the men? What was the result of the people's great joy? (12:43)