

February 27

Scriptures: Read Nehemiah 12

Key Verse: “Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy....” (Nehemiah 12:43)

Overview

Like the books of Chronicles and Ezra, Nehemiah has a priestly emphasis. A detailed list of the priestly families are traced back to those who returned under Zerubbabel. The chief priests during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah are also listed. Mention of the priestly families may have been written at this point, since they were major occupants of Jerusalem, and Nehemiah was concerned with populating the Holy City. Also, at this time period more than ever before, the priests were in a place of prominence, for there were no longer any Israelite kings, and the role of the prophet was now in the background. The written Word of God was now the main revelation of God whereby God communicated with the people. The priests were the scribes and teachers of the Law and were therefore looked to for spiritual guidance.

The priests and Levites played an important part in the dedication of the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem. It was a joyous occasion of praise and worship to the Lord, since it was clear to all, even the adversaries, that God made it all possible (6:16). All the Levites were called upon to assemble. Special mention is made of those from the three families of singers, since they were main participants on this occasion. A huge choir was organized to sing loud praises to the Lord for His mercy and help in building the walls.

Nehemiah divided the group into two sections; one was led by Ezra and the other by Nehemiah, himself. They made two great processions on top of the wall, which were marked by pomp and splendour. All the leaders of the people were in the midst of the procession and behind the Levitical singers were many priests blowing their trumpets with the sound of victory. Beginning at a central point, they proceeded in opposite directions around the wall until they met together at the Temple, where they joined in triumphant singing and worshipped the Lord through many sacrifices.

The rest of the people were on the ground looking up at the spectacular scene. These men, women, and children must have been excitedly following the processions around the walls until they came to the large meeting area in front of the Temple. At this point, the whole family became involved. The sacrifices offered were likely peace or fellowship offerings so everyone could partake of the sanctified meat and have a huge, joyous feast. They celebrated the Lord's goodness and were brought together in unity before the Lord and in fellowship with Him.

Since all the Levites were gathered together at that time, Nehemiah used this occasion to reorganize them in their sacred duties according to the arrangements made long ago by King David. They were faithful to their calling and consecrated themselves to the Lord (12:47). The people were happy to see the priests and Levites in full-time service to God, and they willingly gave toward their support and that of the Temple. Even though they were already heavily taxed by the Persian kingdom that ruled over them and were in a hard economic period, they still sacrificially gave to the Lord's work all during the governorship of both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. God must have blessed them for their generosity.

Prayer

Lord, we celebrate Your person and accomplishments with great joy. You are holy and You've provided holiness for us in Jesus Christ. You have done great works and have given us the privilege of being labourers together with Christ. Hallelujah!