

## CHAPTER 12

# Priests, Levite And Dedication Of The Wall

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*“There are two fatal errors that keep great projects from coming to life: 1) Not finishing, 2) Not starting”*

Buddha Gautama

The completion of the wall marked the climax of a series of wonderful manifestations of God’s guidance and power: the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4) had brought about freedom from captivity, the temple had been constructed, and the Jewish community had been revitalized and renewed. The restoration of the wall of Jerusalem extended the sanctity of the temple to include the whole city. The time had come to remember what God had done and unite in joyous praise to Him.

### **I. Priests and Levites in the days of Zerubbabel, the high priest (1-11)**

*<sup>1</sup> These were the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Joshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>2</sup> Amariah, Malluk, Hattush, <sup>3</sup> Shekaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, <sup>4</sup> Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, <sup>5</sup> Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah, <sup>6</sup> Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>7</sup> Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah and Jedaiah. These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Joshua. <sup>8</sup> The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who, together with his associates, was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. <sup>9</sup> Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, stood opposite them in the services. <sup>10-11</sup> Jeshua was the father of Joiakim; Joiakim was the father of Eliashib; Eliashib was the father of Joiada; Joiada was the father of Jonathan; Jonathan was the father of Jaddua. The names of the chief of the priests and the Levites that came with Zerubbabel.*

**Verse 1** This Joshua is not the Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land; he did however receive the same encouragement from God (cf. Haggai 2:4-5 and Joshua 1:9).

“Shealtiel” was the father of Zerubbabel according to Ezra and Haggai, but 1 Chron. 3:17-19 mentions him as the uncle of Zerubbabel.

“Jeshua” served as high priest from 560-490 B.C. (cf. Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7; 12:10, 26). “Seraiah” is called Azariah in 1 Chron. 9:11. “Jeremiah” is not the same Jeremiah as the prophet. It would not have been possible to live so long through the captivity. “Ezra” may be Ezra the priest and scribe who came up with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem, then returned to Babylon, and again returned to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1, 6-7).

**Verse 2** “Amariah” means “promised by God.” This name appears several times in the Hebrew Bible. He was a priest who, with Nehemiah, sealed the covenant (Nehemiah 10:3). He had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

“Malluk,” also written as “Malluch” in some manuscripts, means “counsellor.” He is one of the heads of families who sealed the covenant with Nehemiah. “Hattush” means “forsaking sin.” He was one of those who signed the covenant with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 10:4).

**Verse 3** “Shekariah” means “habitation of the Lord.” There are six references to this name in the Hebrew Bible. He was one of the priests who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel. “Rehum” means “merciful or compassionate.” It is probable it should be read here as “Harim” (*charim* for *rechum* of Nehemiah 12:15). “Meremoth” means “bitterness or myrrh of death.” This Meremoth may be the priest who was appointed to weigh and register the gold and silver vessels belonging to the temple. In the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, Meremoth played a significant role (Nehemiah 3:4).

**Verse 4** “Iddo” (from *daya*, timely) is the same name as that of the prophet Zachariah’s grandfather (Zech. 1:1). “Ginnethon” (gardener) was a priest who sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 10:6) around B.C. 410. “Abijah” means “my father is Jehovah.” This name appears at least five times in the Hebrew Bible. He was one of the priests who entered into a covenant with Nehemiah to walk in God’s law (Nehemiah 10:7).

**Verse 5** “Mijamin” means “from the right hand.” He was the one to whom the lot fell for the 6th priestly course (1 Chronicles 24:9). His family returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua. “Moadiah” means “Yahweh assembles.” The KJV and TLB translates it as “Maadiah.” It means “pleasantness, the testimony of the Lord.” He was another of the priests who returned with Zerubbabel. “Bilgah” (brightness) occurs only here, in v. 18 and in 1 Chron. 24:14.

**Verse 6** “Shemaiah” means “whom Jehovah heard.” It was a common Jewish name. He was the head of a priestly house and signed the covenant with Nehemiah. “Joiarib” means “whom Jehovah defends.” He was one of the priests who returned from Babylon with Ezra. “Jedaiah” means “Praise Jehovah.” Jedaiah was among “the priests and the Levites” who returned with Zerubbabel.

**Verse 7** “Sallu,” meaning “weighed,” was a priest who returned with Ezra. “Amok” means “deep” or “unsearchable.” “Hilkiah” means “Jehovah is my portion.” Jedaiah was another priest who came back from exile. The rotation of twenty-four priestly houses had been established at the time of David (cf. Jos. *Antiq.* VII, 365 (xiv.7)). Interestingly, twenty-two heads of priestly houses are mentioned here in vv. 1-7.

**Verse 8** The Levites who went with them were: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah—who was the one in charge of the thanksgiving service (TLB translation).

“Jeshua” means “to rescue or deliver.” “Binnui,” which means “a building up,” was the son of Henadad, who assisted in the repairing of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. “Kadmiel” means “God of antiquity; God of rising.” He was one of the Levites who with his family returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:40; Nehemiah 7:43). He and his house are mentioned in history on three occasions (Ezra 3:9; Nehemiah 9:4,5; 10:9) (B.C. 535-410). “Sherebiah,” meaning “heat/fever of Jehovah,” was a Levite in the time of Ezra (Ezra 8:18,24) (B.C. 459). When Ezra read the law to the people, Sherebiah was among the Levites who assisted him (Nehemiah 8:7). He signed the covenant with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 10:12). “Mattaniah” means “gift/hope of the Lord.” He was a Levite, the father of Zaccur, and ancestor of Hanan, the under-treasurer of the Levitical offerings under Nehemiah.

**Verse 9** Bakbukiah and Unni, their fellow clansmen, helped them during the service (TLB translation). “Bakbukiah,” meaning “bottle of

Yahweh,” was a Levite during the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 11:17). “Unni,” short for Anaiah (cf. 8:4), occurs only here and in 1 Chronicles 15:18, 20. The singing was done in antiphonal fashion, with two sections of the choir standing opposite each other (cf. v.24; 2 Chron. 7:6; Ezra 3:11).<sup>1</sup>

Services (*mismarot*, “wards or divisions”) is the title of a work from Qumran which discusses in detail the rotation of the priestly families’ service in the temple according to the sect’s solar calendar, which was synchronized with the lunar calendar.<sup>2</sup>

**Verse 10** Joshua (Jeshua) was the father of Joiakim, the father of Eliashib, the father of Joiada. Joiakim means “whom Jehovah sets up.” He was a high priest, the son of the renowned Jeshua.

Eliashib means “God restores.” He served as high priest in the time of Nehemiah. He, with his brethren the priests, helped in the rebuilding of the wall (Nehemiah 3:1). Later he was “allied with Tobiah” the Ammonite (Nehemiah 13:4) and allowed that enemy of Nehemiah the use of a great chamber in the temple (Nehemiah 13:5). One of his grandsons, a son of Joiada, married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. For this he was expelled from the community by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13:28). Joiada means “whom Yahweh favors.”

**Verse 11** Joiada was the father of Jonathan, the father of Jaddua. Jonathan means “gift of Jehovah.” Jaddua means “known.” The son and successor in the high priesthood of Jonathan or Johanan, he was the last of the high priests mentioned in the Old Testament, and was probably the latest name in the canon.

The high priesthood was a traditional office established by ancestry from Aaron (Exodus 29:29-30). Generally the high priest served for life, though as early as Solomon’s reign a high priest was dismissed for political reasons. Only the high priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies, and then only on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 1:1-25). Today, Jesus is our high priest (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14). We now have access to the throne of God through Jesus Christ our Savior.

## **II. Priests in the days of Joiakim (12-21)**

**Verse 12** *In the days of Joiakim, these were the heads of the priestly families: of Seraiah’s family, **Meraiah**; of Jeremiah’s, **Hananiah**.*

<sup>1</sup> Expositor’s Commentary P753.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

Joiakim was the high priest in the late sixth and early fifth century B.C. “Meraiah” probably from Amariah, occurs only here. This name means “resistance or rebellion.” He was a priest in the time of Joiakim son of Jeshua, and head of the priestly house of Seraiah, to which Ezra belonged. Hananiah means “grace, mercy, gift of God.”

**Verse 13** of *Ezra’s, Meshullam; of Amariah’s, Jehohanan*. Meshullam means “friend or peaceable or perfect.” Jehohanan means “whom Jehovah gave” or “Jehovah is gracious.”

**Verse 14** of *Malluk’s, Jonathan; of Shekaniah’s, Joseph*. For “Shekaniah” the Hebrew MSS read “Shebaniah,” but this is probably an error.

**Verse 15** of *Harim’s, Adna; of Meremoth’s, Helkai*. “Harim” means “flat-nosed.” Adna means “pleasure or delight.” Meremoth means “bitterness” or “myrrh of death.” Helkai means “smooth-tongued.” Helkai is contracted from “Hilkiah,” which means “my portion is Yahweh.” For “Meremoth” the Hebrew MSS read “Meraioth,” which is probably an error.

**Verse 16** of *Iddo’s, Zechariah; of Ginnethon’s, Meshullam*. Iddo means “decked or adorned.” Ginnethon means “gardner.”

**Verse 17** of *Abijah’s, Zikri; of Miniamin’s and of Moadiah’s, Piltai*. Zikri is short for Zechariah. Miniamin means “luck” or literally “from the right hand.” Piltai, meaning “God is deliverance,” occurs only here.

**Verse 18** of *Bilgah’s, Shammua; of Shemaiah’s, Jehonathan*. Bilgah means “cheerful.” Shammua means “renowned.” Jehonathan means “whom Jehovah gave.”

**Verse 19** of *Joiarib’s, Mattenai; of Jedaiah’s, Uzzi*. Mattenai means “gift of Jehovah.” Uzzi, meaning “the Lord is my strength”, was a priest, chief of the house of Jedaiah in the time of Joiakim the high priest.

**Verse 20** of *Sallu’s, Kallai; of Amok’s, Eber*. Sallu means “weighed.” The MT has “Sallai.” Eber was also the eponym of the Hebrews (Gen. 10:21), and means “beyond.”

**Verse 21** of *Hilkiah’s, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah’s, Nethanel*. Hashabiah means “whom God regards/God has given.”

### III. Levites during the reign of Darius the Persian (22-26)

<sup>22</sup> *A genealogical record of the heads of the clans of the priests and Levites was compiled during the reign of King Darius of Persia, in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua—all of whom were Levites.* <sup>23</sup> *In The Book of the Chronicles the Levite names were recorded down to the days of Johanan, the son of Eliashib.*

<sup>24</sup> *These were the chiefs of the Levites at that time: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua (son of Kadmiel).*

*Their fellow clansmen helped them during the ceremonies of praise and thanksgiving, just as commanded by David, the man of God.*

<sup>25</sup> *The gatekeepers who had charge of the collection centers at the gates were: Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub.*

<sup>26</sup> *These were the men who were active in the time of Joiakim (son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak), and when I was the governor, and when Ezra was the priest and teacher of religion.*

**Verse 22** The family heads of the Levites during the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, as well as those of the priests, were recorded in the reign of Darius the Persian.

Darius the Persian is believed by many to be Darius III Codomannus (336-331 B.C.). He was defeated by Alexander the Great, which brought an end to Persian rule. But this is highly unlikely, as his rule postdates Nehemiah. This Darius coincided with the priesthoods of Jaddua and Johanan, which identifies him as Darius II (423-404 B.C.). His given name was Ochus. The son of Artaxerxes I by a Babylonian concubine, he was the governor of Hyrcania on the Caspian Sea. His half-brother, Sogdianus, killed Xerxes II and seized his throne in 423 B.C. Ochus soon executed Sogdianus and seized the throne for himself. Uprisings and corruption plagued his reign, but he won the Peloponnesian War, conquering Greek coastal cities on the Aegean.<sup>3</sup>

**Verse 23** The family heads among the descendants of Levi up to the time of Johanan son of Eliashib were recorded in the book of the annals. “The book of the annals” is literally the “book of the words/deeds of the days,” or “Chronicles.” This may have been the official temple chronicle containing various lists and records.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee 1997 Pg. 404

<sup>4</sup> Expositor's commentary P.754-755\*

“The book of the annals of the kings of Israel” is mentioned eighteen times in 1 and 2 Kings; and “the book of the annals of the kings of Judah” is mentioned fifteen times in these two books.

**Verse 24** Kadmiel means “God of antiquity; God of rising.” The two groups stood opposite each other, and one section responded to the other, giving praise and thanksgiving “on David’s directions” (see references in 1 Chron. 16:14; 23:27-31; 2 Chron. 8:14).

**Verse 25** Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon and Akkub were gatekeepers who stood watch over the treasuries of the temple at the gates. Bakbukiah means “the Lord pours out.”

**Verse 26** They served in the days of Joiakim son of Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law.

#### **IV. Dedicating the Walls of Jerusalem (27-43)**

The most interesting point of this pericope is the enormous march around the city on top of the rebuilt walls. It is displayed as a double procession to emphasize the sacrificial contributions of Ezra and Nehemiah at this climatic moment in the narrative. The wall which was ridiculed that even a fox could cause its collapse, now hold hundreds of people as a testament of God’s greatness in front of the enemies.

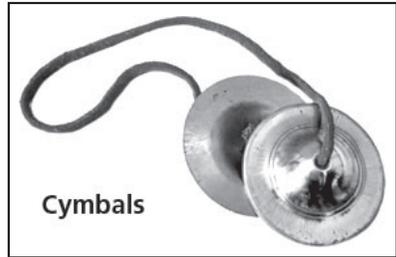
##### **A. Preparation for Celebration (27-30)**

*27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. 28 The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites, 29 from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. 30 When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.*

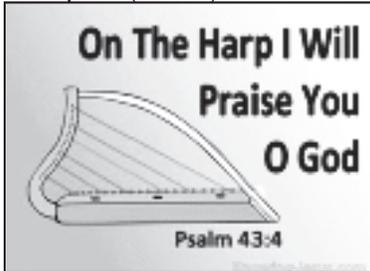
**Verse 27** “Dedication” translates the Aramaic word “*Hanukkah*”. This Jewish holiday in December commemorates the recapture of the temple from the Seleucids and its rededication (165 B.C.). You can compare the dedication of the temple by Solomon (1 Kings 8) with the dedication of Zerubbabel’s temple (Ezra 6:16). The dedication of the

wall here culminated the efforts of the people under Nehemiah's inspired leadership. Great celebration details are recorded here.

“Cymbals” (*mesiltayim*) were used for religious ceremonies (2 Sam. 6:5; 1 Chron. 16:42; 25:1; 2 Chron. 5:12; 29:25; Ezra 3:10). Cymbals have been recovered from Beth-Shemesh and from Tell Abu Hawam.<sup>5</sup>



“Harp” (*nebel*) occurs twenty-seven



times. The KJB translated the word twenty-four times as “psaltry” and four times as “viol.” They were used mainly for religious ceremonies. The harp was an instrument with strings of varying lengths.

“Lyres” (*kinnor*) occurs forty-two times. The LXX renders it twenty times as “*kithara*” and seventeen times as “*kinura*.” The KJV translates the term as “harp”, the RSV as “lyre.” The lyre was an instrument with strings of the same length but of different diameters and tensions (see Gen. 4:21; 1 Sam. 16:16; 23:1; Dan. 3:5,7,10, 15). David's lyre provides an example.



“Lyres” (*kinnor*) occurs forty-two

**Verse 28** The musicians were brought together from the region around Jerusalem--from the villages of the Netophathites. “Netophathities” were from Netophah (1 Chron. 2:54; 9:16; Ezra 2:22; Neh. 7:26).

“Netophathites” means distillation. The name of this town occurs only in the catalogue of those who returned with Zerubbabel from the captivity (Ezra 2:22; Nehemiah 7:26, 1 Esdras 5:18). Though not directly mentioned till the late period, Netophah was really a much older place. Two of David's guards (1 Chronicles 17:13,15) were Netophathites. The “villages of the Neophathites” were the residence of the Levites (1 Chronicles 9:16). From another passage we learn that the particular Levites who inhabited these villages were singers (Nehemiah 12:28).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 756

Based on Nehemiah 7:26, the town was located in the neighborhood of, or closely connected with, Bethlehem (from *Smith's Bible Dictionary*).

**Verse 29** "Beth-Gilgal" was perhaps the Gilgal near Jericho (Josh 4:19-20) or the Gilgal of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1). It means "rolling, heap, wheel." Beth means "house." This Gilgal was located seven miles north of Bethel. There are two Gilgal's mentioned in the Bible.

### **B. The purification of Priests, Levites, and People (30)**

**Verse 30** When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates, and the wall. On "purified" compare Ezra 6:20. The verb (*taher*) occurs ninety-four times in the Old Testament, and was used almost exclusively of ritual or moral purity. It was also used to indicate the restoration of someone who had contracted impurity to a state of purity or holiness. Ritual purification was aimed to teach God's holiness and moral purity (Lev. 16:30).<sup>6</sup>

### **C. Two choirs lead Jerusalem in joyful praise (31-43)**

**Verse 31** *I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.*

There were two great processions or parades. The first procession was led by Ezra (v. 36) and Hoshaiiah (v.32) and moved in a counterclockwise direction along the top of the wall. The second one, led by Nehemiah, moved in a clockwise direction. They met at the Prison Gate and Water Gate, then entered the temple area (cf. Ps. 48:12-13).

**Verse 32** *Hoshaiiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them.* "Hoshaiiah" means "Yahweh has saved". This name occurs only here and in Jeremiah 42:1.

**Verse 33** *along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam.* Ezra here is not Ezra the scribe (v.36).

**Verse 34** *Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah.* "Judah" is not mentioned in the LXX.

**Verse 35** *As well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zakkur, the son of Asaph.*

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 756

Each choir was composed of seven priests blowing trumpets and the Levites playing on other musical instruments. “Asaph” was the founder of one of three guilds of Levite musicians (1 Chron. 25: 1-2).<sup>7</sup>

**Verse 36** *and his associates--Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani--with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the teacher of the Law led the procession.*

“Milalai” is missing in the LXX, perhaps an error for “Gilalai,” which occurs only here, as does “Maai.” Maai means “compassionate.” Judah is missing from the LXX.

**Verse 37** *At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the site of David’s palace to the Water Gate on the east.*

See previous notes on the Fountain Gate and Water Gate. The procession went around the southern end of the walls, then north up the eastern wall to the Water Gate near the Gihon Spring.

**Verse 38** *The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people--past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall.*

The second choir translates literally as “the second thanks”, that is the thanksgiving choir. “In the opposite direction” literally means “to the left,” indicating a northward movement. This processions, led by Nehemiah, went north in a clockwise direction around the northwestern sections of the wall, past the Tower of Ovens, to the Broad Wall.

**Verse 39** *over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate.*

“Over the gate of Ephraim” This is the gate which led to the tribe of Ephraim, where that tribe formerly dwelt (Nehemiah 8:16). The prison gate was not a gate of the city, but of the court of the prison (Nehemiah 3:25), located near both the king’s palace and the temple (Jeremiah 20:1-2).

**Verse 40** *The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials,*

The final destination only of the two choirs and of one half of the lay leaders is given. Nothing is said of the rest of the first procession,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid 757

including its priests and Levites. This suggests that the first procession moved towards the temple from the Water Gate, and the second from the Sheep Gate. They met up in the Court of the Guard, and there they reassembled - the choirs, groups of priests, and others, then proceeded together into the temple.

**Verses 41-42** *as well as the priests--Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah.*

The passage gives the description of the second procession. “The choirs sang” means “the singers made themselves heard.” “Jezrahiah” means “Yahweh shines forth” (cf. Izrahiah, 1 Chronicles 7:3).

**Verse 43** *And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.*

“Great sacrifices” (cf. Judges 16:23) were offered because “God made them rejoice with great joy” (cf. 1 Chron. 29:9; Jonah 4:6).

The dedication of the wall is thought to have happened in September-October 445 B.C. The dedication was quite remarkable, and the sounds of singing, musical instruments, and rejoicing could be heard far and wide (12:43b). As noted, two choirs marched atop the wall, singing antiphonally (responsively). Ultimately they all entered the temple to continue their worship with singing and great sacrifices.

#### **D. The settling of the offices of the priests and Levites in the temple (44-47)**

**Verse 44** *At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, first fruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites.*

“Storerooms” translates “*niskhah*,” and occurs only here, in 3:30, and in 13:7. “The people of Judah were pleased” (i.e., it gave them great joy) to contribute their offerings to support the priests and Levites. “Ministering” literally means “standing” (cf. Deut. 10:8, “to stand before the Lord to minister to him).

Although today we observe New Testament church practices, this is a reminder to all of us to give offerings, tithes and first fruits to honor the Lord in gratitude for His provision. No one ever became poor by giving to the Lord and His work. But I know wealthy people who became poor and bankrupt because they “robbed” God (Malachi 3:8-10).

My (Saji) mother, Ann, was a true believer in generosity. Even though she did not earn any money, she would take cash from my dad’s pocket and give generously to visiting evangelists and pastors. She was often scolded and beaten for taking this money. But the truth is that today we, her eight children, have been blessed physically and spiritually because of her obedience in giving to the Lord’s work. Whenever her children would send money for her medicine and oil, she would often take that money to help the poor women who visited our house, or workers who labored on the farm.

**Verse 45** *They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the musicians and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon.*

The dedication service led to the climatic ceremony of purification for all, including the musicians and gatekeepers as per the command of David and his son Solomon. The purpose of the purification was so that no unclean person would enter the sacred building. This was the official duty of the porters (2 Chron. 23:19). Owing to the pressure of the occasion, it was considered expedient that the singers should be associated as assistants.

**Verse 46** *For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.*

Asaph, the founder of one of the three musical guilds, was a Gershonite Levite to whom David entrusted the “service of song” in the tabernacle (cf. 1 Chron. 6:39; 2 Chron. 29:30; 35:15; Psalms 50, 73-83).

**Verse 47** *So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the musicians and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.*

On “Zerubbabel” see Ezra 2:2, 3:2, 8; 4:2-3; Neh. 7:7; 12:1. “Contributed” translates to a participle implying continued giving. “The daily portions” literally mean “the matter of the day in its day.”

## Conclusion and Application

When the solemnities of a Thanksgiving Day leave such an impression on ministers and people as to cause them to be more careful and cheerful in doing their duty, they are indeed acceptable to the Lord. Whatever service we do must be purified by the ‘sprinkling of blood’, and by the empowering grace of the Holy Spirit, or it will not be acceptable to God. The point here is to dedicate (set apart) our lives daily for the service of our Holy God.

Following the dedication, the people evidenced great strength. The comments in 12:44-13:3 likely refer in general to the period after the covenant ceremony of Nehemiah 10 and the dedication of the wall, and were added here before resuming the Nehemiah memoirs. These comments confirm that the community was being faithful to the covenant they signed in Chapter 10.

Let us affirm the truth that we are better when we are together. Let us appreciate the beautiful body of Christ. We need each other to accomplish God’s purposes in this world. So, let us appreciate one another’s gifts. Let us celebrate one another with great joy, love, and humility as we collaborate for rebuilding the broken walls of people’s lives and society.



*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy;  
without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

*Hebrews 12:14*



## **Discussion Questions**

1. Describe a special event that you attended recently where you celebrated God and His faithfulness. How do you ensure that honor is given to the Lord in this kind of public setting?
2. What is your natural response to success? What can you learn from the example of Nehemiah (verses 31-43)?
3. Why should the celebration of God's goodness and the pursuit of holiness be associated?
4. How do we develop a culture of holiness and worship in our personal lives and churches?
5. How important is it for you to recognize the various gifts in your local church and use them for building God's kingdom? How do you mobilize others for the God-given task? How will you give proper honor to those who deserve it?