

International Bible Lesson Commentary
Nehemiah 12:27-38, 43
International Bible Lessons
Sunday, August 18, 2013
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 18, 2013**, is from **Nehemiah 12:27-38, 43**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lesson Commentary** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Nehemiah 12:27-38

(Nehemiah 12:27) Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

It took Nehemiah and those working with him 52 days to complete the rebuilding of the walls and gates around Jerusalem. Then, they planned a celebration involving praise and thanksgiving to God. They called the Levites, singers, and musicians from surrounding towns to lead the people in dedicating the wall to God. They knew that ultimately their protection depended on God, and they rejoiced in that knowledge and wanted to thank God for His many gifts to them.

(Nehemiah 12:28) The companies of the singers gathered together from the circuit around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites;

Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the scribe (who was a Levite) organized and led the service of dedication. Netophathites lived in the town named Netophah. Two of King David's warrior heroes were born in Netophah (see 2 Samuel 23:28, 29). Levites and singers also dwelt there. The "circuit" probably refers to the singers who were assigned to sing and lead the singing during different times of the year by a system of alternation or rotation.

(Nehemiah 12:29) also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem.

Nehemiah continued to list the villages around Jerusalem where the singers lived. These singers may have also played instruments; however, groups of worship leaders played instruments. Nehemiah and Ezra wanted to emphasize that all the worship leaders were called in to lead all of the people in praising God.

(Nehemiah 12:30) And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

The priests and the Levites (who assisted in leading the service of dedication), and the people were all purified or ceremonially cleansed so they could worship God in holiness. They purified themselves by repenting and ceasing to disobey the law of God. They resolved to obey God in everything. The gates and the wall were also purified by the priests. They dedicated their temple, and their city with its walls to serve God, and they dedicated themselves to live godly lives. In this way everyone and everything were purified for the service of God. The Book of the Law specified how the priests were to sprinkle themselves, others, and objects to purify them ceremonially to worship God.

(Nehemiah 12:31) Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession. One went to the right on the wall to the Dung Gate;

The narrative continued in the first person as recorded by Ezra, who many believe wrote the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. Ezra recorded what Nehemiah said and wrote. This service was well organized and not simply a spontaneous service of thanksgiving. Having dedicated and purified themselves, the worshipers walked completely around the wall that surrounded Jerusalem.

(Nehemiah 12:32-36) and after them went Hoshai and half the officials of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, and some of the young priests with trumpets: Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph; and his kindred, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and the scribe Ezra went in front of them.

Ezra led this group of leaders. Trumpet players and others with musical instruments accompanied the group. Instruments of the type that King David would have used, such as the harp that he played when he sang Psalms, were used in addition to the types of instruments used during the time of David, such as cymbals and lyres.

(Nehemiah 12:37) At the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went straight up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

They walked where King David had walked when he was King, and as they walked they dedicated every gate and every set of stairs that led up to the top of the wall where defenders would stand guard and fight. The walls were deep (or wide) enough and strong enough for the procession to walk up and for an army to fight from when they were on the top of the wall.

(Nehemiah 12:38) The other company of those who gave thanks went to the left, and I followed them with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall,

The Book of Nehemiah recorded how the other group marched around the wall and the gates they dedicated to the Lord. Both groups thanked God for moving the king of Persia to give them permission to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. They also thanked God for protecting them from their enemies while they rebuilt the city wall and gates.

Nehemiah 12:43

(Nehemiah 12:43) They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

When the people dedicated the temple as the Book of Ezra described, the people both rejoiced and wept. Here, when they dedicated the rebuilt wall and gates the people only rejoiced. “God made them rejoice with great joy” does not mean that they did not want to rejoice and that God manipulated to them to make them rejoice. Rather, God energized and strengthened their desire to rejoice so they rejoiced beyond their human abilities and rejoiced in the strength that God gave them: men, women, and children rejoiced. People can pray that God will increase their ability to worship and their spirit of rejoicing, especially when they rejoice with thanksgiving to God for His many blessings upon others and themselves.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Was the worship of the Israelites at the dedication of the rebuilt wall spontaneous or planned? What did their worship emphasize?

2. Ultimately, who did the Israelites depend on to meet their needs? How did they express their dependence?

3. What did the service of dedication involve primarily?

4. What indication does this chapter give that King David was an important part of their memory?

5. What reason does this chapter give for the people rejoicing?

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