

***Reason for Rejoicing***  
***International Bible Lesson***  
**Nehemiah 12:27-38, 43**  
**Sunday, August 18, 2013**  
**L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

*“Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off” (Nehemiah 12:43—KJV).*

*“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” (Nehemiah 12:43—NRSV).*

When the Jews returned from exile, they first rebuilt their temple, because worshiping God according to the Law of Moses was of first importance to them. Their rebuilt temple also demonstrated the presence of God in Jerusalem. Much later, the Jews completed and dedicated their rebuilt city wall around Jerusalem and offered great sacrifices with great joy. Whereas many might have chosen to rebuild their city wall first for protection, they trusted in God as their ultimate Protector. With encouragement from their prophets and help from God, they rebuilt their city wall and ended years of shame. Later, God would use their rebuilt city wall not only to help protect them from armed invaders, but also to prohibit them and others from desecrating the Sabbath by doing business with foreign traders on the Sabbath, who could only be kept out of Jerusalem on the Sabbath when the city gates were closed and guarded. In some sense, their city wall was merely symbolic, because Persian kings still ruled over them. Yet, God had directed the decisions of these Persian kings so they helped the Jews rebuild both their temple and their city wall, and they also gave them the freedom to worship God according to the Law of Moses, even giving them animals to sacrifice. When they dedicated their city wall, they remembered many reasons to thank God for all He had done for them, and they rejoiced over God’s loving care of them. The more they sacrificed, the greater they rejoiced; the greater they rejoiced, the more they sacrificed.

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## 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?