

RESTORING THE BROKEN

A Study of Ezra and Nehemiah

Read Nehemiah 12.

1. What theme or themes do you see in this chapter?
2. What event is the focus of the chapter? (v. 27)
3. Why do you think it was important to begin this section with a record of the family lines of the priests and Levites? (Consider Neh. 7:64.)
4. Read about the establishment of worship leaders in 1 Chronicles 25:1-7. What influence did King David, a singer and musician himself, have on what takes place in Nehemiah 12? (vv. 24, 36, 45-46; * 2 Chron. 8:14)
5. Sometimes praise erupts spontaneously from God's people, but here we see a carefully crafted celebration of praise. What is the plan? (You may want to pull out your map from lesson 12 to follow the route of the procession.)
vv. 27-29

The genealogy of the priests and Levites in Nehemiah 12 is of those who returned from exile back to Jerusalem. This is a continuation of the record in 1 Chronicles 6 that traces their ancestry back to Levi, son of Jacob, from whom the Levites took their name. By combining these two lists we have a record from before their time in Egypt all the way up to this moment in Nehemiah 12, a span of more than 1,400 years. These meticulous records remind us that each person on the list is important to the Lord. We read of another list in Revelation 20:12-15; this list is the Lamb's book of life. In this case those recorded are there not because of their ancestry but because of their adoption by God.

v. 31a

vv. 31b-39

vv. 40-42

v. 43

6. What is significant about where the two groups of worshipers meet after circling the city in opposite directions? (You may want to review where our study began in Ezra 1:2. 📖 Hag. 1:7-8; 2:9)

7. Nehemiah has been in Jerusalem for about a year when this celebration takes place. What might have been going through his mind as he stands up on top of the walls and remembers all that has transpired? (Begin in Nehemiah 1:3 and skim up to chapter 12 to get some ideas.)

PURIFICATION

“When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.”
(Neh. 12:30)

Purification according to the Law required the priests to wash with water, shave their bodies, anoint themselves and everything with blood or oil, offer sacrifices for their sins, and wear sacred washed garments. Purification also required all the people to abstain from sexual relations, wear clean clothes, and have water containing the ashes of a sacrifice poured over their heads. So, although our passage mentions purification in just a few words, the priests and people had to undergo a whole ceremony of cleansing before they could participate in the dedication of the wall. Even the wall and gates, which had been defiled by the Gentiles who had conquered the city years earlier, were purified!¹

12. We don't know what the people sang, but consider the psalm of David from 1 Chronicles 16:7-36, which he committed to the tabernacle singers on a similar occasion. Read this psalm and take some time before the Lord to write your own psalm of praise as you recall his faithfulness to his promises, his people, and you specifically.

This study has been adapted and expanded with permission from a study of the same name by Bridge Community Church, Phila., PA.

* For further study

¹ Exod. 19:10, 14-15; 30:17-21; 40:9-15, 30-32; Lev. 16:4; 16:4, 28; Num. 8:5-15; 19:1-22.