



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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Study 36: THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL

Nehemiah 12:1-47

The completion of the wall afforded the Jews yet another opportunity to praise and worship God (through a ceremony of dedication), for His greatness and faithfulness. The celebration of success and victory is not against Biblical principles. Israel was commanded of God to celebrate the Passover. Miriam led the praise worship when Israel crossed the Red Sea and God destroyed the armies of Egypt in the same sea. The deliverance of the Jews at the time of Esther was commemorated with an annual holiday. Jesus attended wedding and other Jewish festivals. These and other similar celebrations gave God the glory He deserves, ignited faith and confidence in the celebrants, galvanised unity, fellowship and sense of belonging among the people as well as cement the memory of the victory. So it is not the celebrations, but the manner in which it is performed that matters before God.

Many today would seek opportunity to blow their own trumpets and declare to the world their achievements, but these Jews recognized where true victory comes from and they were ready and willing to give honour to God, whom honour is due. In this chapter we can see the purpose and preparation for the ceremony, the purification of the people and the pattern of the praise worship.

1. PURPOSE AND PREPARATION

Nehemiah 12:1-29; Deuteronomy 8:10-18

With hindsight the Jews could perceive the hand of God in the inspiration, preparation, provision, protection and victory over enemies and discouragement throughout the building process. Many in their day of victory forget the God who delivered them from their enemies. These Israelites earnestly sought to praise and worship the Lord in an acceptable way. In verses 1-26 a list of priests and Levites is given from the time of Zerubabel. Their main objective in presenting this list was to show that the provision for the work of the temple continued properly from the time of Zerubabel to that of Ezra and Nehemiah (vs. 26, 47). ***The significance of this is that acceptable praise can only be offered by people who have consistently followed the Lord through thin and thick.*** It was not a spurious activity of casual individuals who took up the duty only when they have nothing else to do. Steadfastness and consistency pleases God, who also rewards such people accordingly - ***“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”*** (I Corinthians 15:58).

As part of the preparation they brought all the Levites from the villages and towns outside Jerusalem to participate in the praise. They consulted scriptural principles laid down by David and Solomon (vs. 24). This reminds us of the importance of proper preparation for any event. Proper preparation prevents not only poor performance but also a downward deterioration into worldliness and carnality! Such preparations should focus not only on the tasks and materials but also on the quality

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of individual lives. God delights in using 'prepared' people for divine assignment. Doors of opportunity always open to the man / woman who has prepared himself / herself for any station in life. **In life, it is better to be prepared without having an opportunity than to have an opportunity without being prepared.**

2. PURIFICATION OF THE PEOPLE:

Nehemiah 12:30, 45; Isaiah 52:11; Habakkuk 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:19-21; Deuteronomy 23:14; Hebrews 12:14

The most important preparation made by the Jews for the ceremony was the purification of the priests, the people and the property. This would have involved abstinence from legitimate pleasure, washing, cleansing, self-examination, repentance and restitution. God is holy. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He cannot stay in a polluted camp nor accept praises from unholy vessels. Many are ignorant of God's requirement for holiness and purity. They have gotten the misconception that God accepts people just as they are. (Yes indeed, but only at salvation). To continue meriting God's favour thereafter one must keep oneself pure. We must **"work out our salvation with fear and trembling"** (Philippians 2:12; 2 Peter 3:11-14; 1 John 3:1-3). As holiness is the central teachings of the scripture, it also ought to be the central ambition of any Christian who is serious about making heaven. For any service or worship to be acceptable to God it must be rendered **"in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life"** (Luke 1:75). Any believer or group of believers that are lacking in holiness cannot experience the true manifestation of the power and presence of God (Deuteronomy 23:14). Often, such people fall easy preys to satanic traps and delusion of 'strange fires'.

3. PATTERN FOR THE PRAISES:

Nehemiah 12:24, 27-46; 1 Chronicles 23:30

Care was taken to ensure that the organization for the praise was done in accordance with the commandment of David and Solomon (vs. 24, 45-46; 1 Chronicles 23:30). They still held strictly to the scriptures they knew despite their experiences at Babylon. There was no allowance made for modernization or for carnal excesses to satisfy the flesh. For praise to be acceptable to God it must be scriptural. Instruments of music were used under the direction of the priests, not for sensual pleasure but to add melody, variety and pleasantness to their praises. Everybody from the princes to the peasants participated in the praises (or at least were represented). They formed dual procession of praise worshippers each walking in opposite direction on top of the wall led by Ezra and Nehemiah. **We can use every situation in our life as occasion to give thanks unto the Lord, for "praise is comely for the upright"** (Psalms 33:1).