

Dedication Ceremonies

[Nehemiah 12:27-28 HCSB](#) At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sent for the Levites wherever they lived and brought them to Jerusalem to celebrate the joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. (28) The singers gathered from the region around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites,

Even among Lowlanders **the completion of great tasks is usually accompanied by pomp and circumstance**; the cutting of ribbons, the music of bands, speeches and such. How much more should the accomplishment not only of a huge project but a project that is known to be the will of God! It would have been strange had they NOT set aside a time of dedication and celebration.

By the way, that's a hint as to what we should be getting ready to do once Project Nehemiah is completed and we move into the new sanctuary. Any excuse to party, eh?

Music filled the air according to verses 31 and 38 and there was great joy.

- [Nehemiah 12:43 HCSB](#) On that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. The women and children also celebrated, and Jerusalem's rejoicing was heard far away.

Loud music

Think about that. They were partying so hard that the sound of it carried far and wide. Would that God's people would always get that excited about doing His good, pleasing, and perfect will. I guarantee you one thing though; our Rubicon service came pretty close to waking the neighbors! That was a lot of fun. Frankly, I wasn't sure of the reception and I wasn't sure of which direction to go with the sermon. You guys let loose and had a joyful, worshipful time and I can tell I'm going to have to get a little southern on you next time!

If there is anyone who should be marked by joy, it should be the children of God! Amen? Sure, **God calls us to service**. He absolutely calls us to the sacrifice of discipleship. However, **He also calls us to celebration**!

- [Exodus 12:13-14 HCSB](#) The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. (14) "This day is to be a memorial for you, and you must celebrate it as a festival to the LORD. You are to celebrate it throughout your generations as a permanent statute.

He calls every generation in perpetuity to celebrate the fact that He is a liberating God who causes the Death Angel to pass over His people.

- [Exodus 23:14 HCSB](#) "Celebrate a festival in My honor three times a year.

We celebrate human birthdays once a year – shouldn't we celebrate Triune God three times? The point is that God calls us just as much to be a joyful, celebratory people as He does to "take up our cross and follow" Him.

Halakha actually commands thankfulness and rejoicing!

- [Deuteronomy 12:7 HCSB](#) You will eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice with your household in everything you do, because the LORD your God has blessed you.¹

I think that should be the Hospitality Team's theme verse, don't you? Now if that isn't a biblical support for potlucks I don't know what is! I'm kidding of course but the fact remains that we serve a God who allowed His Messiah to perform His first miracle at a party! God loves a good party. Look five verses later.

¹ See also Deuteronomy 14:26; 16:11–15; 26:11; 27:7; cf. 28:47

- **Deuteronomy 12:12 HCSB** You will rejoice before the LORD your God--you, your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance among you.

Then again six verses later!

- **Deuteronomy 12:18 HCSB** You must eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God chooses--you, your son and daughter, your male and female slave, and the Levite who is within your gates. Rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you do,

“Rejoice...in everything you do.” I’ll be honest; I have a hard time doing this. I have a hard time counseling painful situations and rejoicing about it. I tend to get exhausted and whine about it! However, shouldn’t I rejoice that there are answers in the Bible for every problem? I have a hard time rejoicing about washing dishes. Shouldn’t I rejoice that we have food to eat and thus dirty so many dishes? Shouldn’t I be grateful that Yahweh Yireh gave me such a good cook for a wife? You see what I mean? It’s all about perspective. We need to learn to be grateful; learn to be joyful; learn to see the good things rather than being such whiny sour pusses half the time.

Why were they celebrating again? Because their **great tasks had been completed?** That’s partly it. However, it was also because **God’s will had been accomplished. Prophecy was being fulfilled** right before their very eyes! Cyrus’ decree as seen in Ezra 1:1-4 had been fulfilled.² The people of God had been restored. They had all kinds of reasons to party.

Let’s look at some of the ways that they celebrated. Understatement was definitely not the order of the day. Look at verse

- **Nehemiah 12:24 HCSB** The leaders of the Levites--Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, along with their relatives opposite them--gave praise and thanks, division by division, as David the man of God had prescribed.

Antiphonal choirs. “Division by division” can be translated as “one section responding to the other”, especially when the qualifier “as David the man of God had prescribed.” This was the antiphonal singing as can be seen in the fact that the Levites who were leading the praise songs stood in groups opposite each other during the services according to verses 8-9 of this same chapter.

By the way, there are only two instances of David being called a “man of God”, here and in 2 Chronicles 8:14; and in both occasions the context is his ability to organize the praise and worship services. The man had skills that even the Lord appreciated apparently.

So, they had different groups of people standing on opposite sides of the gathering space singing back and forth to each other. Think of the stereo effect that would have produced! How beautiful!

Look at verse 27:

- **Nehemiah 12:27 HCSB** At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sent for the Levites wherever they lived and brought them to Jerusalem to celebrate the joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres.

Special instrumentalists. They hired outsiders! They found some people who were specially trained and brought them in for the party. They accompanied the music with cymbals, harps, and lyres. I’ve never understood the denominations like some of the Brethren who believe it’s wrong to have any kind of instrumental music. I don’t know how they can support that biblically. No wonder they’re so small a denomination!

² Ezra 1:5 cp Nehemiah 7:73

I want you to go back a bit. Look at verse 25 there at the very end of the verse. Who do you see there? **Gatekeepers!** It wasn't just the big music stars and the dynamic speakers who mattered. Everyone, down to the **traffic control and security guys**, was indispensable.

Listen to me – in God's ministry everyone counts; everyone is important. When you welcome people with a big smile and hand them a bulletin you are setting the tone of the service. When you greet them as they sit down and open up a friendly conversation, you are welcoming them into the presence of the God who wants to commune with all people. When you watch over their kids so that the parents can focus on the Word of God, you are helping to build marriages and soothe haggard, exhausted, frazzled spirits. God gave every one of us different gifts.

- **Ephesians 4:7-8 HCSB** Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the Messiah's gift. (8) For it says: **When He ascended on high, He took prisoners into captivity; He gave gifts to people.**
- **Ephesians 4:11-12 HCSB** And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, (12) for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

Not all of the gifts are listed here in Ephesians 4, but all the various gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ are important and we will grow as a church to the degree that all our gifts are used and coordinated in the building of the Kingdom. God calls us to work together as a community, to be dependent upon one another, and to help each other in the completion of the Great Commission.

Excellent leadership. Having said that, the worship leaders were very important. It says "they sent for the Levites wherever they lived." (v. 27). Everything rises and falls on good leadership. It takes leadership to get everyone's gifts recognized, identified, motivated, and coordinated.

There is a Hebrew word here, hidden behind all the English "joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing". It is the word **todot**. It's translated as "choirs" in vv. 31, 38, and 40 so the best way to understand it here in verse 27 is that the music was being performed by "**thanksgiving choirs**"; groups of people who dedicated themselves especially to singing out their gratitude and praise to the Lord. What a great ministry!

Look at verse 28:

- **Nehemiah 12:28 HCSB** The singers gathered from the region around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites,

Special singers. Besides these Levitical, antiphonal and thanksgiving choirs, were simply "singers". Perhaps they were soloists? People with unique talents that allowed them to stand out from the crowd and perform on their own?

Huge celebratory feasts; special speakers; massed choirs marching up stairs and flowing across the walls singing echoing, antiphonal praise; smaller praise choirs; massed orchestras with percussion, brass and wind instruments; specially built raised platforms; talented soloists backed by the choirs and orchestras – our God likes a show. Hashem likes a good party. He's glad when His people recognize how fortunate they are to be saved and have such a great King.

Turn if you will to:

- **Revelation 19:1-9 HCSB** After this I heard something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God, (2) because His judgments are true and righteous, because He has judged the notorious prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality; and He has avenged the blood of His servants that was on her hands. (3) A second time they said: Hallelujah! Her smoke ascends forever and ever! (4) Then the 24 elders and the

four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who is seated on the throne, saying: Amen! Hallelujah! (5) A voice came from the throne, saying: Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, both small and great! (6) Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying: Hallelujah--because our Lord God, the Almighty, has begun to reign! (7) Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself. (8) She was permitted to wear fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. (9) Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true."

Immutable God does not change. He is still worthy of our worship. He is still worthy of our praise. He still commands His people to serve Him with gladness and to offer sacrifices of praise. He still inhabits our praise. What a mighty God! What a mighty King! Let's always endeavor to bring Him the best worship we can. Grandiosity has its place in the worship of Yahweh Adonai.