



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH Lesson 12

In our lesson last week, we read about the resettlement of the city of Jerusalem. Chapter 12 continues with the same subject, reminding us again that every generation and every person is important to God. Derek Kidner writes, "This is no rabble of refugees, settling down anywhere; they have the dignity of order and of known relationships; above all, of their calling to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6).

I just returned from Israel a few days ago, and I wish each of you had been able to come with me! It's hard to understand the importance of rebuilding a wall in our society today. No city does that. But as we stood in front of the wall of Jerusalem, looking at the huge stones and size of the walls, everything we have been reading came to life! Even the ruins of the various cities we visited were surrounded by a wall for protection, security, and community. It made what the Israelites were doing as we read in our lessons, so much more understandable. Even hauling away the rubbish seemed much more complex. Rebuilding the wall in 52 days was a miracle, an absolute miracle. And now, as they rebuild the city, God continues to work miracles.

#### First Day

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1-47. This chapter can be broken up into two sections. Answer the following questions for each section.

#### **Section 1, 12:1-26**

A. What facts do you find?

B. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

C. What's the main point of this section?

**Section 2, 12:27-47**

A. What facts do you find?

B. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

C. What's the main point of this section?

2. What groups of people are mentioned? In verses 1-9, we find the group who were the first "homecomers." Do you remember who led them? What were some of their duties?

Verses 10-11 record six generations of high priests, beginning with Jeshua. This bridges the gap between the first exile and the contemporaries of Nehemiah. King Darius, mentioned in verse 22, is thought to be Darius II.

3. What were some of the duties of the Levites in verses 24-25?

4. What spiritual applications can you find in this chapter?

That's it for today. Continuing the thought from last week, let us always be diligent in the "duties" or "ministries" specifically given to us by the Lord.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Give to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!" 1 Chronicles 16:29

### Second Day

**Work on your memory verse. Isn't it a beautiful verse?**

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1-47, focusing on verses 27-47. Give this section a title.

The rebuilding of the city was showing progress. People were moving in, getting settled, and now it was time to give honor to the Lord. The people had been dedicated to the Lord, in chapters 8-10, and now it was time to dedicate their work to Him.

2. How would you describe the "mood" of this section?
3. In this section, how many times are the following words mentioned?
  - A. Singing
  - B. Thanksgiving
  - C. Rejoicing
  - D. Musical instruments

The word "gladness," in verse 27, means "gaiety, mirth, pleasure, delight." They were having a celebration of joy!

4. According to verse 30, what did the priests and Levites have to do before they joined the celebration? Why?

It's interesting to note that before the leaders could lead the people, they had to be made clean. We're not sure exactly what "purification" means, but it obviously had to do with some sort of personal cleansing and sin offering. Before a leader can lead, his own heart has to be clean and pure.

5. Swindoll said, "Holiness precedes happiness." What do you think he meant?
  
6. Why do you think it's so important that you ask the Lord to examine and cleanse you before you try to minister to others?

These people were full of joy as they celebrated this victory! They took the time to stop and honor God for what He had done.

7. How often do you take the time to stop and rejoice in what God has done, and is doing, in your life?
  
8. Joy and gladness can be catchy! What do Proverbs 17:22 and 15:13 say about this?
  
9. Can you commit to share joy with one person you meet today? Can you bring them some medicine to brighten their soul?
  
10. Take some time to remember something that God has done in your life; some victory that He has wrought. Can you lift your voice in praise and gladness to Him, thanking Him and honoring Him for His mighty work?

See you tomorrow, ladies! May you savor the time of praise and worship of Him!

### Third Day

**What's your memory verse?**

1. Read Nehemiah 12:27-47 again. Nehemiah referred to himself in the third person a few times (8:9, 10:1, 12:26) but is now back to the first person in verse 31. What does Nehemiah do?

This dedication service must have been beautiful! They were divided into two groups, one led by Ezra (36), the other by Nehemiah himself (38). The processions marched in different directions, both meeting at the house of God (40). The climax was "offerings of great sacrifices, with great joy" (vs 43)!

2. Who joined the choir and sang out loud for joy? (vs 43)
3. Why do you think it was important for the people to march along the wall, viewing the gates and different sections? How was it an encouragement to them?
4. How was it a witness to the rest of the world? Recall the words in 4:3.
5. Notice the influence of David in verses 24, 36, 45, and 46. Why?

The songs the Israelites sang were songs of praise, recalling all that God had done for them, exalting Him for His great faithfulness, mercy, and grace. As we sing songs of praise, we not only honor God, we remind ourselves of His greatness. Worshipping can strengthen our faith and renew our confidence. Raymond Brown wrote, "As we sing these magnificent psalms, we lose our sense of solitariness in suffering and realize we are part

of a vast worshipping company of people throughout history who have proved the reliability and sufficiency of God."

6. Notice their praise was heard "afar off" (vs 43). What does that tell you?

It's awesome to see how they all worshipped and sang together, in one accord, lifting their voices so all could hear of the great things God had done. And the people joined in enthusiastically, not allowing it simply to be the "professionals" doing the singing. So often, our worship becomes man-centered instead of God-centered. We can get sidetracked and begin to look at worship as something that should please, thrill, or minister to us, rather than to please and minister to God.

7. When you enter the church for service, do you prepare your heart to worship with the community of believers? Do you think about the words and what they mean, rather than how good the worship team sounds? Can you set aside your own personal desires and musical tastes and celebrate Jesus? Think about this ...
8. Do you worship enthusiastically, like they did? (That doesn't mean you have to jump around; it's an attitude of the heart.) How would you describe your own personal worship experience lately?
9. Have you ever dedicated something, maybe a house you lived in, your children, a special project you've been working on, or something of that nature? Why is it important to take the time to do this?

John MacArthur wrote, "Genuine worship is the supreme sacrifice a Christian can offer to Christ. There is a time for ministering to the poor, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned. There is a time for witnessing to the lost and seeking to lead them to the Savior. There is a time for discipling new believers and helping them grow in their faith. There is a time for careful study and teaching of God's Word. But above all else what the Lord requires of His people is their true worship, without which everything else they may do in His name is empty and powerless."

10. Write your thoughts on the above quote. End by writing a prayer of praise and thanksgiving as an act of worship to the Lord.

### Fourth and Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44-47. What else was part of their worship service?
2. Read Nehemiah 10:32-39. What had the people promised they would do? According to verse 44, why else were they happy to give?

Part of their dedication service was to make provision for the needs of the ministers of the temple. They had been obedient to God's Word (vs 30, 45) and conducted the worship as commanded by David and Solomon. The people had a plentiful supply of produce to offer as a tithe and offering to take care of them. Our material gifts are a sacrifice to the Lord when given with the right heart.

3. I know we discussed this before, but it never hurts to examine ourselves again. Describe your habit of giving. Are you generous? Are you a cheerful and enthusiastic giver and supporter of whatever church you attend? Why is this principle so important?
  
4. Notice these six characteristics of the people's giving to the Lord's work. Give the verse that reflects each one.
  - A. Organized
  - B. Specific
  - C. Gratefulness
  - D. Obligatory
  - E. Regular
  - F. Universal

Mike MacIntosh wrote, "God called His people to Jerusalem where He was the center of attention. And when God is the center of our attention, there is always great joy!"

5. Is God the "center of your attention"? Is there great joy in your heart? Does your life reflect that gladness?
  
6. What spoke to your heart in this chapter? Is He calling you to change in any way, whether it be in attitude, behavior, or thoughts?
  
7. Perhaps you have been feeling a little distant from the Lord. Is it time to rededicate your heart to Him? Maybe there is some self-examination and purification that needs to be done. Use this time to begin with purification; then move on to celebrate the joy of what He has done! Let everyone hear your praise "afar off"!

**See you next week! I'm sad ... only one more chapter!**

