

## Chapter Twelve

### PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. Are all these lists of names from the same time?
2. Why do you suppose the dedication service did not follow the completion of the walls, in 6:15?
3. Do you see any reason for the choral procession around the entire length of the walls?
4. What would be the value of a dedication service, anyway?

### OUTLINE

There are two topics in this chapter: priestly and Levitical lines (vss. 1-26), and the dedication of the wall (vss. 27-47).

- B. The genealogies of priests and Levites are given, and the wall is dedicated.
  1. Priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel (vss. 1-9).
  2. Names of high priests, from the Return from Captivity to the end of Nehemiah's time (vss. 10, 11).
  3. Priests' families at the time of Joiakim (vss. 12-21).
  4. Levites, in the time of Joiakim (vss. 22-26).
  5. Levites assembled for dedication of the wall (vss. 27-30).
  6. Processional and dedication ceremonies (vss. 31-43).
  7. Concern about support of the Levites (vss. 44-47).

### TEXT AND VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENT

Having given an honor roll of those who accepted the discomforts of living in Jerusalem in order to assure a strong and healthy state, the book next gives an honor roll of the religious leaders who contributed equally to the survival and well-being of the state. The text itself will indicate the varying periods in which this data was assembled.

The fact that in many cases the names are of families and not individuals does not lessen the honor; the oriental would find it even more gratifying to bring honor to the family name than to his own.

B. The genealogies of priests and Levites are given,  
and the wall is dedicated.

1. A list is given of the priests and the Levites who  
came up with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

#### TEXT, 12:1-9

- 1 Now these are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,
- 2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,
- 3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,
- 4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,
- 5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,
- 6 Shemaiah and Joiarib, Jedaiah,
- 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah. These were the heads of the priests and their kinsmen in the days of Jeshua.
- 8 And the Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah who was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving, he and his brothers.
- 9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brothers, stood opposite them in their service divisions.

#### COMMENT

Neh. 7:39-42 has already told us there were over 4,000 priests who returned to Jerusalem at the one time. Here in vss. 1-7 a longer list of heads of families is given (the clans are evidently broken down into smaller units), but it is still from Jeshua's and Zerubbabel's time. Eight, perhaps eleven, of the twenty-two names are also affixed to the document in chapter 10.

*Verses 8, 9* add the names of Levites from Zerubbabel's day. Of the eight, four names are on the document in chapter 10. Of course, in neither this nor the case above can we assume that the others were opposed: see Neh. 10:28f. The reference in *verse 8* to being in charge of song, and in *verse 9* to standing opposite them, appears to refer to antiphonal arrangement of choirs: see 11:17. The occasion being referred to could be that in Ezra 3:10.

2. The high priests descended from Jeshua are traced, possibly to the end of Nehemiah's life.

TEXT, 12:10, 11

- 10 And Jeshua became the father of Joiakim, and Joiakim became the father of Eliashib, and Eliashib became the father of Joiada,  
 11 and Joiada became the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan became the father of Jaddua.

### COMMENT

The odd thing about this list is that it traces the office down to Jaddua; a man by that name was high priest at the time of Alexander the Great, a hundred years after Nehemiah returned the second time to Jerusalem. Even Dr. Ironside, a thorough conservative, believes this to be an addition by a later hand, though still inspired.<sup>1</sup> It is not an impossibility however that Nehemiah may have lived long enough to see the birth of Jaddua, who could have been a very old man in Alexander's day.

There is also an Eliashib in this list, which recalls the Eliashib whose son Ezra mentions (Ezra 10:6). There may be no connection, but this creates the possibility that Ezra's friend may have been a son of the high priest, though not his successor.

3. The priests' families are listed at the time of Joiakim.

TEXT, 12:12-21

- 12 Now in the days of Joiakim the priests, the heads of fathers' households were: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Haniah;  
 13 of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;

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1. Ironside, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

- 14 of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;
- 15 of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;
- 16 of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;
- 17 of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;
- 18 of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;
- 19 of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;
- 20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;
- 21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

### COMMENT

Only two comments come to mind here.

Joiakim, in *verse 12*, succeeded Jeshua (*verse 10*); therefore this entire list is from the next generation after the list in verses 1-7.

This means that the Ezra in *verse 13* (and obviously the Ezra in *verse one*) is not the Ezra of the previous book, and the associate of Nehemiah; the date is a little too early.

#### 4. Levites are listed from the time of Joiakim.

#### TEXT, 12:22-26

- 22 As for the Levites, the heads of fathers' households were registered in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua; so were the priests in the reign of Darius the Persian.
- 23 The sons of Levi, the heads of fathers' households, were registered in the Book of the Chronicles up to the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.
- 24 And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers opposite them, to praise and give thanks, as prescribed by David the man of God, division corresponding to division.
- 25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers keeping watch at the storehouses of the gates.

- 26 These served in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

### COMMENT

According to *verse 22*, records were kept of the Levites from the time of the second high priest after the Return from Captivity until into the fourth century B.C. (cf. vss. 10, 11); Jaddua may have lived to the time of Alexander the Great. Similar records for the priests covered a like time span, according to many who identify Darius the Persian as Darius III, Codomannus, 336-331 B.C. Because of the late date, Dr. Ironside also calls this a later insertion: cf. comments on vss. 10, 11. The later hand is only verifying that the records were still being kept in his day.

*Verse 23* says these records were in the Book of the Chronicles: not the Bible book, but apparently a register kept in the Temple. Johanan may be another spelling for Jonathan, who was a (grand-) son of Eliashib.

*Verse 24* again describes antiphonal arrangement of choirs.

In *verse 25*, the gatekeepers would be on duty at the Temple storehouses, not the gates of the city.

*Verse 26* dates the above list of Levites to the time of Joiakim, a generation later than the previous list of Levites (vss. 8, 9), and contemporaneous with Nehemiah and Ezra.

#### 5. The Levites were assembled for the dedication of the wall.

#### TEXT, 12:27-30

- 27 Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites from all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and with songs to the accompaniment of cymbals, harps, and lyres.

- 28 So the sons of the singers were assembled from the district around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites,  
 29 from Beth-gilgal, and from their fields in Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem.  
 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; they also purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

### COMMENT

The rest of the chapter, clearly from Nehemiah's hand (vs. 31), describes the service of dedication for the wall, completed in Neh. 6:15. How much time has elapsed in between is hard to say. The delay may have been caused by the concentration on the reading of the Law in the intervening chapters. Or it may have been necessitated by the logistics of preparing a sufficiently grand and impressive program. Or they may have wished to wait till the city was sufficiently occupied (chapter 11) and the walls were adequately manned. It is people who are being dedicated more than things, for flesh and blood is as necessary to walls as are stones, and the act of dedication was more spiritual and psychological than physical. The greatest value of the wall also was psychological, as it furnished success and encouragement to a dispirited people. In Adenay's words, "This act, although it was immediately directed to the walls, was, as a matter of fact, the reconsecration of the city . . ."<sup>2</sup>

*Verse 27* is a reminder that many of the Levites lived in surrounding towns, where they either occupied themselves with teaching the Law or with making a living in the light of the reality of inadequate support.

*Verses 28, 29* equate the singers with the Levites: they were a subclass of them in Ezra 2:41.

In *verse 30*, before dedication there is a need for purification from defilement. Even the Tabernacle, and now the Temple, had

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2. Adenay, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

their laver for cleansing the priests and the offering before sacrifices were made. As an illustration of the point previously made, note that the people are cleansed along with the wall.

## 6. The processional and dedication ceremonies are described.

### TEXT, 12:31-43

- 31 Then I had the leaders of Judah come up on top of the wall, and I appointed two great choirs, the first proceeding to the right on top of the wall toward the Refuse Gate.
- 32 Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah followed them,  
33 with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,  
34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,  
35 and some of the sons of the priests with trumpets; and Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph,
- 36 and his kinsmen, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them.
- 37 And at the Fountain Gate they went directly up the steps of the city of David by the stairway of the wall above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.
- 38 The second choir proceeded to the left, while I followed them with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of Furnaces, to the broad wall,  
39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, by the Old Gate, by the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate, and they stopped at the Gate of the Guard.
- 40 Then the two choirs took their stand in the house of God. So did I and half of the officials with me;  
41 and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah,

- Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with the trumpets;  
 42 and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan. Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang, with Jezrahiah their leader,  
 43 and on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy, even the women and children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.

### COMMENT

*Verse 31* begins the descriptive of a processional of dignitaries and choirs in two columns almost the entire length of the wall, around the city.

*Verses 32-36* give the personnel included in one column.

In *verse 36*, the kind of instruments associated with David are used, with the explanation that he was the man of God; so we see their effort to conform even in small details to the tried and proven paths to evoke God's pleasure. At the front of that procession, right behind the choir, was Ezra.

In *verse 37* their route is traced from a point south of the city to another on the east.

Meanwhile, *verses 38, 39*, a second column began at the same southern point and followed along the west wall and apparently circled more than half of the city. Following the choir and leading the rest of this procession was Nehemiah.

In *verse 40*, both columns arrived at the Temple where the choirs and some of the dignitaries stationed themselves for the ceremonies to follow.

*Verses 41, 42* list the priestly participants and the choir leader, and mention the singers and the instrumental accompaniment.

In *verse 43* there is one more word for joy in the Hebrew text than in English: five times there is rejoicing or joy! Amid it all was the offering of innumerable sacrifices, and thrilled by it all were men, women, and this time without question, children.

The impression made by the pageantry, the dignitaries (Ezra



and Nehemiah both may have been recalled from Babylon and Persia for the occasion), the music, and the smell and sight of sacrifices, must have been awe-inspiring.

### 7. Concern is expressed over the support of the Levites.

#### TEXT, 12:44-47

- 44 On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.
- 45 For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification, together with the singers and the gatekeepers in accordance with the command of David and of his son Solomon.
- 46 For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times, there were leaders of the singers, songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God.
- 47 And so all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah gave the portions due the singers and the gatekeepers as each day required, and set apart the consecrated portion for the Levites, and the Levites set apart the consecrated portion for the sons of Aaron.

#### COMMENT

There was a very practical outcome to all of this, as there should be to great spiritual feasts. Perhaps the ceremonies themselves had pinpointed the inadequate support which the priests and Levites had been receiving though this is not mentioned. Perhaps their soul-stirring contribution of their talents had moved the great audience to gratitude; *verse 44* implies as much, for it speaks of the people's joy at their service. At any rate, arrangements

were made to obtain a great offering for them. How that reminds us of dedication services today!

*Verses 45, 46* speak further of the action of these servants of God, reminding us of the hand which David and Solomon had taken in organizing and directing these orders (I Chr. 25:1; II Chr. 8:14).

In *verse 47* the names of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah are linked together, perhaps to stress the continuity as the two fulfilled the same office and conducted the Lord's work well.

## WORD STUDIES

**PURIFY (vs. 27):** the basic idea of the Hebrew word is brightness or splendor; i.e. it causes something to shine or be bright. It signifies to be or become clean or pure: to cleanse or purify. It can be done for three reasons. (1) Of physical purity: Ezek. 39:12 describes the cleansing of the land from corpses. Num. 8:6, 7 speaks of washing and completely shaving the Levites to prepare them for God's service. (2) Of ceremonial purity: Ezek. 43:26 speaks of cleansing the altar for the new Temple of which Ezekiel had a vision. A leper who had been healed would be purified in a ceremony administered by a priest: Lev. 14:11. (3) Of moral purity: Mal. 3:3 uses the figure of purifying metal from dross as a parallel of a person's moral cleansing. Jer. 33:8 speaks of cleansing through God's forgiveness.

**DEDICATION (vs. 30: Hanukkah):** Sometimes a study of word derivations leads one down some strange and unexpected paths. There are three words formed from the same base, all of which have one common meaning: to choke. Apparently from this come the ideas of being narrow or of closing. A *collar* is placed around the *neck* of an animal and it is *strangled* down so that it can be *initiated* into man's service and *trained* for usefulness: thus it becomes *dedicated*, or *consecrated* to certain purposes. Each of the italicized words is a translation of one of the forms of this word. Our English word, "neck," is derived from this same base (note the N and K, also in Hanukkah). So a wall was "collared" for man's service.

## SUMMARY

This chapter records the names of families of priests and Levites who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest; then the names of successive high priests covering about two centuries; then a list of Levite families, about a generation after the return.

Then follows a description of the service of dedication for the rebuilt wall surrounding Jerusalem: the assembling of Levites from many communities; the purification of the priests, people, gates, and wall; the two columns of Levite choirs, dignitaries, priests, trumpeters, and more singers; with Ezra and Nehemiah serving as parade marshals for the two columns; the covering at the Temple for numerous sacrifices and a service rendered by the priests and Levites. Everything was done according to patterns established long ago by David and Solomon. The people continued to give the prescribed portions to the Levites on the specified days, and the Levites gave their portion to the priests when Nehemiah was governor, as they had when Zerubbabel had been their governor.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who were the leaders of the two processions that circled the city?
2. Where did the parade end?
3. What sacrifices were made?
4. How did the people show gratitude to the Levites for this impressive service?