

NE 12:27 At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. ²⁸ The singers also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem--from the villages of the Netophathites, ²⁹ from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. ³⁰ When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

NE 12:31 I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate. ³² Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them, ³³ along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, ³⁵ as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah 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 associates--Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani--with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the scribe led the procession. ³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

NE 12:38 The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people--past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped.

NE 12:40 The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, ⁴¹ as well as the priests--Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets-- ⁴² and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. ⁴³ And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

1. **Sought out the people to lead worship** – They looked for the people who could best do the job. ***the Levites were sought out from where they lived.*** The principle here is not just looking for people to do the job – but going to them. There are people in our community with amazing talents that God wants to use – we need to enlist them. Some of these people may not want to be enlisted. Maybe we need to pray and work with them on that. Some people may not be christian as yet, or people may not know they have talents yet.

Note what they were to do. Celebrate.

and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.

No matter what we think people come to church for – the reason we ask them is so they can celebrate God.

Before church I don't know what you do but some of us pray before hand. Get ourselves and our attitudes right with God. On Sunday morning a couple of deacons pray with me before the service, at night, it is usually just Michael or a few muso's. What is wrong with us? Are we serious about this church thing. Obviously not. We don't prepare ourselves. But we notice here that the priests did.

2. **The priests etc purified themselves (prepared themselves.)**

30 When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall. Hey purified themselves, that means they went through a ritual that God had set out so they were right before Him so they could lead others. I come back to that question – What is wrong with us? We just are not serious about church. I have had discussion this week about church growth and what people want from this church but the critics aren't in the prayer room, they aren't praying for the people who come. I think it is obvious that we are not serious about affecting our community when there is three people praying before church Sunday morning and two praying Sunday night. Sorry to be so blunt. No I'm not. Let's be realistic – I can't do your praying – I can only pray for you. The people who lead the night service – the muso's get here at 5 o'clock to prepare the music that will help you worship, setting up the PA, praying, getting music ready, practicing. Sunday morning there are people preparing the church and themselves an hour before hand, we would love people to be praying as we prepare. Why? So we can purify the people – so we can help whoever comes in the doors to worship God. I am a bit passionate about this. We can talk and criticise all we want but until we start praying – we are only beating the air.

3. **Shared duties.** (Covered the whole wall – share the load – get the lot done!!!) The reason I have to say all of that is because ministry is all about team work. Look back at the passage. From Verse 31 to 43 is about people working together, using their talents in ministry. All these people they went out – from their homes – working together with one common aim. Worshipping God. That's our job. Notice to that the two choirs split up and went different directions. This was not a theatrical maneuver – they effectively covered the whole wall. It was the wall being dedicated – so with the two teams they covered the lot. Some times we go different directions to cover all the work. It has to be that way. We need to share the load to get the job done. That means trusting people to do their job. Let 'em do it.

Verse 43 shows us something interesting. ***43 And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.***

4. **They Offered Sacrifices** yeh so – that was what they did. Actually at this point they didn't need to. The offering of sacrifices was not expected by God here. They did it because they wanted to give to God. And it cost them. Remember that they could not offer a animal with a defect. They could only offer their best. It cost them, It cost them their best bull, the one they wanted to breed their herd from, they offered their best ram, the one they wanted to breed from. Their personal wealth was tied up in this. So was their trust in God's providence. How much would their best bull cost today – definitely more than their weeks wage. The question must be asked is our worship a sacrifice?? Does it cost us our best bull???? Or does it only cost us watching 60 minutes??) A number of years ago I spoke at a missionary function. At that function a women spoke of a Salvation army mission fundraising project called OWSOMS. One weeks salary on Missionary Service. This was one audacious fundraising concept. They challenged people to do it. You know what 10% of the people present signed

up and did it. A weeks salary just like that. IS our act of worship comparable? Does it cost us to worship, are we willing to let it.

What is the result of this type of worship? ***God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.***

I'm not going to ask you to give a weeks salary to the Mission appeal, but I am going to ask you make a commitment to be serious about worship. To commit to coming to pray before hand, to commit to allowing your giving and offerings to being worship so that we give our best. I am asking you to be serious about the way we do church and more than anything I am asking you to be serous about your relationship to GOD.