

# Is There Really a Finish Line in a Building Project?

## Nehemiah 11-12

Although the project to rebuild the walls is now over, the service and the sacrifice of the people is not. Nehemiah calls on the people to present sacrifices to God.

### 1. We must give ourselves to God (11:1-12:26).

- When the Israelites were released from captivity and allowed to return, many of them chose not to resettle in Jerusalem.
  - The city was large with poor defenses surrounded by destroyed homes.
  - There would be a high cost with moving to Jerusalem because it was a target for danger.
  - Anything holy was viewed as a threat to unholy nations and would be the target of malice and threats from enemies.
  - Farming was the primary occupation so to move to Jerusalem meant giving up your principal way of living so you could serve in the city. They had to trust those who remained in the villages outside of Jerusalem to provide for you and your family while you worked in the city.
  - Moving to Jerusalem meant change in environment, neighbors, friends, and lifestyle. But their loyalty to the purpose of maintaining the community made them willing to do it.
- If you are not interested in being holy, you are not going to pick a “holy city” to live in. By calling the city “holy” there is an expectation on the residents of the city to also be holy.
- God still calls His people to be holy (1 Peter 1:14-21).
  - Ignorance means “a lack of information that may result in reprehensible conduct.”
  - Futile means to be of no use, idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth.
- There were some Israelites who wanted to live in Jerusalem.
  - Never underestimate the importance of simply being physically present in the place where God wants you. You may not be asked to perform some dramatic ministry, but simply being there is a ministry.
- Ways they served in Jerusalem
  - Defend the city
  - Served God in the temple
  - Supervised the maintenance of the building (Nehemiah 11:16).
  - Ministered with prayer and praise (11:17, 22).
  - Guard the temple (11:19).

### 2. We must give our praise to God (12:27-42).

- It was time to dedicate the work that the people had done.
- Two choirs depart from different locations and they meet here in verse 40.
- Need to cultivate a spirit of generosity in our lives (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
  - He wired into us that when we give sacrificially, there is a joy that impacts us.
  - It is a joy that only comes when we give sacrificially.
  - Every once in a while, you get to see up close the fruit of your giving.
- The people were getting an opportunity to see and touch the freshly built walls surrounding Jerusalem.
- The people were saying to the rest of the world that God built these walls. He did this work and He alone should be glorified.
- By marching on the walls, the people had an opportunity to see the results of their labor and realize one more time the work was performed by a team of people and not just one person.

- Nobody owned the part he or she worked on. The wall belonged to God. We are stewards of what He has entrusted to us.
  - The important thing was the expression of joyful praise that came from the choirs and the people.
  - They offered praise in three different ways: thankfully, joyfully, and loudly.
  - The “joy of Jerusalem was heard far away” (vs. 43).
3. We must give our gifts to God (12:44-47).
- In Nehemiah 10:32-39, the people covenanted with God that they would support the temple ministry and here we see in chapter 12 that they kept their promises.
  - These tithes and offerings represented the support of the temple workers so that they could serve the Lord.
  - Ministers at the temple were exemplary both in their personal purity and in their obedience to God’s Word.
  - The people gave “not grudgingly or of necessity” but joyfully and gratefully.
  - Our material gifts are really spiritual sacrifices to the Lord, if they are given in the right spirit.
  - But before we can bring our material gifts to the lord, we must first give ourselves to Him.
4. Application.
- Honestly answer the question, “Have I given myself to God?”
  - Evaluate your life honestly and ask “Is the Lord over every area of my life?”
    - When do I lie?
    - What do I defend? What do you find yourself arguing with people about? What area of your life do you not welcome questions in?
    - Where do I go for comfort? Food? Sex?, Alcohol? Study? Facebook? Twitter?
    - What am I proudest of? This is what you lead with when you meet new people?
    - What are you anxious about? Future? Health?
    - What makes me angry?
    - What, if I lost it, would cause me to want to die?
  - You can’t just change your affections, you have to exchange them. Jesus has to seem to you more reliable, more beautiful, more desirable than your idol.
  - Repentance is fueled by being certain you are loved and accepted by Christ.
  - Do we sing enough? How much singing to God have we done today, did yesterday, shall we plan to do tomorrow?