

Nehemiah Chapter 12

Verses 1-26: Originally there were 24 courses of priests, each course serving in the temple for a period of two weeks per year or for one month biannually (see 1 Chron. 24:1-20). Only four of those houses returned from Babylon (see 7:39-42; Ezra 2:36-39), but these were divided into 24 courses of which 22 are listed here. Perhaps two are omitted because their families had become extinct, because no sons were born since the time Zerubbabel originally named them. This then is a selective rather than exhaustive listing of priests and Levites from the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, recording the key priests and Levites through 3 generations of High-Priests:

- (1) Jeshua who came in the initial return with Zerubbabel ca. 538 B.C. (verses 1-11);
- (2) Joiakim, the son of Jeshua (verses 12-21);
- (3) Eliashib (compare 3:1), the son of Joiakim (verses 22-23);
- (4) A miscellaneous group who served in the days of Joiakim (verses 24-26).

These verses serve as a generational roll call of the “priests and the Levites” who had served from the time of “Zerubbabel” (the return of the first exiles), up to Nehemiah’s day. This suggests the importance of appreciating the heritage that others have provided for us.

Verses 1-9: These are names of 22 priests and eight Levites who returned with Zerubbabel. Fifteen of these priests are listed among those who sealed the covenant in Nehemiah’s day, so it seems that they sealed the covenant in the name of their families (10:3-9). The priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 22:2, 36-40), are listed.

Nehemiah 12:1 "Now these [are] the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,"

Who went up from the captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem with them. The one was the prince, the other the High-Priest, the same with Joshua the High-Priest (Zech. 3:1). The names of the priests are given in this and the six following verses.

“Zerubbabel ... Jeshua” (see note on Ezra 2:2).

"Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra": Not Jeremiah the prophet, who cannot be thought to live so long as through the captivity. But Ezra may be Ezra the priest and scribe, who might come up with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. And return to Babylon again, and from thence come again as he did, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1). Though this by some is not thought very probable.

Jeshua was the High-Priest in Zerubbabel's time. Seraiah was the High-Priest murdered by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah and Ezra here, were not the same as those who have books named for them.

Nehemiah 12:2-4 "Amariah, Malluch, Hattush," "Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth," "Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah,"

We must take time here and recognize that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was descended from this Abijah. His wife, Elisabeth, was descended from Aaron. They were both descended from the priestly family of Aaron, in fact.

Nehemiah 12:5-7 "Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah," "Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah," "Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These [were] the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua."

All of the names listed were the names of the chief of each of the priestly families.

Nehemiah 12:8 "Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, [and] Mattaniah, [which was] over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren."

Who lived in the same times were;

"Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah": Most of these are made mention of in (Neh. 8:7). The last of them is said to be;

"Over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren": He was the precentor, or had the directing and conducting of the songs of the temple, particularly the thanksgiving song at the daily sacrifices. Jarchi takes the word here used to be the name of a musical instrument.

Nehemiah 12:9 "Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, [were] over against them in the watches."

Two other Levites; the first is mentioned (in (Neh. 11:17).

"Their brethren, were over against them in the watches": The Levites were divided into twenty four wards, and these were placed one against another (1 Chron. 23:6).

We must continue to remember that Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel were the leaders of the three divisions of the Levitical tribe. The others mentioned here, were heads of families of the Levites.

Verses 10-11: This record lists 6 generations of High-Priests beginning with Jeshua (the Jonathan of verse 11 is the Johanan of verse 22).

This bridges the gap between the first generation after the Exile (verses 1-9), and the contemporaries of Nehemiah. It carries forward the genealogy of (1 Chron. 6:3-15), which ran from Aaron to the Babylonian exile.

Nehemiah 12:10-11 "And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada," "And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua."

“And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua”: This is an account of the High-Priests in succession in the second temple, the first six of them. And if Jaddua, the last mentioned, is the same with Jaddus, as Josephus supposes, who went forth in his pontifical robes to meet Alexander the great returning from his conquests of Tyre and Gaza. From whom he obtained many favors, and whom he had into the temple, and showed him the prophecy of Daniel concerning himself. This paragraph must be written by another hand, and not Nehemiah, since it can hardly be thought he should live so long. And as to his times, this account of him, or the history of his own times, seems not to have gone through the priesthood of Eliashib, the third of those High-Priests (see Neh. 13:28). And to reach no further than to the thirty second of Darius Hystaspis (Neh. 13:6). This fragment therefore might be inserted by some godly man under a divine direction in later times, as we have several insertions in the books of Moses and Joshua of the like kind. And particularly in (1 Chron. 3:19), where the genealogy of Zerubbabel is carried down beyond the times of the Maccabees, and so could not be placed there by Ezra.

Jeshua was the High-Priest of Zerubbabel's time. Eliashib was mentioned as High-Priest, after Nehemiah reached Jerusalem. Joiada was in office 36 years. It was believed that Jonathan murdered his brother Jeshua, in the temple, so that he might be High-Priest. All of those listed above were High-Priests.

Verses 12-21: These were the sons of priests listed (in verses 1-7), who lived in the days of Jeshua's successor, “Joiakim”. “Zechariah” was the famous prophet (verse 16; Ezra 5:1).

Each of the 22 families (in verses 1-7), is repeated, except one (compare Hattush; verse 2). Perhaps by the time of Joiakim's High-Priesthood, this family had become extinct, the fathers having no male offspring.

Nehemiah 12:12 "And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;"

This was the son and successor of Jeshua, or Joshua, the first High-Priest of the second temple. The principal men of the priesthood in his time were as follows, and who were the sons, or however the descendants of the priests in the time of his father before mentioned. These were Meraiah, Hananiah, Meshullam, Jehohanan, Jonathan, Joseph, Adna, Helkai, Zechariah, (the prophet of that name), Meshullam, Zichri, Piltai, Shammua, Jehonathan, Mattenai, Uzzi, Kallai, Eber, Hashabiah, and Nethaneel. In all twenty, whereas there are twenty two named, as in his father's days, there being no sons or descendants from two of them, namely, Hattush and Miamin.

This was the beginning of a list of the priestly families, starting with the High-Priest, Joiakim. Each of those mentioned above, were the head of their priestly family.

Nehemiah 12:13-21 "Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;" "Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;" "Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;" "Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;" "Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;" "Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;" "And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;" "Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;" "Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel."

The families of Jedaiah and Joiarib did not put their mark to the covenant supposedly. They were probably, listed toward the last for that reason. These were all the men who were the heads of priestly families.

Verses 22-26: "Eliashib" was a contemporary of Nehemiah and the grandson of Jeshua, the High-Priest in Zerubbabel's day. "Johanan" was the same as "Jonathan" (of verse 11). According to Josephus, "Jaddua" was High-Priest when Alexander the Great invaded Persia (333 B.C.). If so, then the "Darius" of this verse (verse 22), was Darius III (335 – 331 B.C.). But more likely there were two High-Priests with the same name or Nehemiah knew Jaddua as a young man. The Elephantine papyri refer to Johanan as High-Priest (in 408 B.C.). Nehemiah may have lived until about 400 B.C. and seen young Jaddua become High-Priest sometime between 408 and 400. By this reckoning Jaddua would have been in his nineties by (333 B.C).

Nehemiah 12:22 "The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, [were] recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian."

The third priest of the second temple.

"Joiada; he was the son of Eliashib, and the fourth High-Priest.

"And Johanan; the same with Jonathan (Neh. 12:11), and whom Josephus also calls Joannes.

"And Jaddua": The same as in (Neh. 12:10). In the days of each of these;

"Were recorded chief of the fathers": The principal men among the Levites.

"Also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian": This refers to Darius II (ca 423 – 404 B.C.). An account is given of the priests in the times of Joiakim (Neh. 12:12). These verses being inserted, the account goes on (Neh. 12:24) etc., of the chief of the Levites in the times of Joiakim only.

The only thing that I can make of this is, perhaps they had the Levites recorded as the chief of the fathers, up until the time that Darius reigned.

Nehemiah 12:23 "The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, [were] written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib."

“Book of the Chronicles”: Literally “were written in the book of the chronicles”. This involved precise genealogical records kept in the administrative archives of Judah.

We know from our previous studies in Chronicles, that there were records kept of all of the heads of the families, and particularly of the civil and spiritual leaders. They thought it very important to keep an accurate genealogy of each family. The book of chronicles, mentioned above, was a record book other than the Chronicles in the Bible. It was terribly important to keep that type of record of the Levitical families during the Old Testament to see who could be High-Priest or priest. We are not told exactly why the record keeping ceased in the time of Johanan. When the Lord Jesus came to the earth, He was the High Priest forever. The ministry before the time of Jesus' visit to the earth was by family heritage. It was ministering the law. After Jesus was crucified, the ministry is of the Spirit. Anyone who has the Spirit of God dwelling within them can minister. In fact, everyone who is a believer should minister in some capacity.

Nehemiah 12:24 "And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise [and] to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward."

At the dedication of the rebuilt walls, Nehemiah appointed two “great companies of them that gave thanks” (12:31), made up of Levites having both musical skills and grateful souls (12:8). These were apparently antiphonal choirs (group alternating with group), echoing each other’s lines in the psalms they sang and recited.

David had re-set the functions of the temple up, just before he died. David truly was a man after God's own heart. Again, we see the beginning of the listing of the chief Levitical families.

Nehemiah 12:25 "Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, [were] porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates."

At the gates of the temple (see 1 Chron. 9:15).

"Keeping the ward, at the thresholds of the gates": Of the temple, where they stood and watched. Or "at the collection of the gates", meaning either where the people were gathered together, or where money gathered was laid up. And so, some render it "the treasuries of the gates": unless a place called Asuppim should be meant (1 Chron. 26:15).

Nehemiah 12:26 These [were] 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, the scribe."

Who was High-Priest in Babylon, and whose grandson was now High-Priest in the time referred to.

"And in the days of Nehemiah the governor": The writer of this book.

"And of Ezra the priest, the scribe": Who was contemporary with him.

We see the keepers of the gates above. Perhaps the keepers of the treasury door as well. Nehemiah was a civil leader in the office of governor. Ezra, as priest and scribe, was a spiritual leader.

Verses 12:27 – 13:3: The walls were dedicated.

Verses 27-47: This section relates to the dedication of the wall and the organization of temple services. Verse 27 resumes the narration of details for (11:2). Verses (31-37), present the "two great companies" that Nehemiah gathered at the southwest corner of the city wall (at the valley gate). Ezra led the first company eastward and then northward. The other group proceeded north, then east to the temple area, meeting the first group in the temple courts (verse 40), where they offered sacrifices and praised God (verses 41-43). The mention of "David" and "Solomon" distinguishes the guilds of singers and gatekeepers, founded when Jerusalem became the settled place of worship, from the priests and other Levites who served at the altar (verse 45a).

"The dedication of the wall": In the same manner marking the dedications of the temple in Solomon's day (2 Chron. Chapters 5-7), and the rebuilt temple several decades earlier (Ezra 6:16-18). The rebuilt walls were dedicated with the music of thanksgiving (most likely shortly after the events of (Neh. Chapter 9).

"Asaph" appears in (1 Chron. Chapters 15, 16, and 25 and in the titles of Psalms 50, and 73-83).

The Bible links the spirit of grateful praise with the victorious Christian life (2 Chron. 31:2; 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14). This dedication was not just a celebration of the completion of a project but the beginning of a new way of life. Now the people were dedicating themselves as the people of God. "Priests, people, gates" and "wall" were all "purified".

Nehemiah 12:27 "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, [with] cymbals, psalteries, and with harps."

In which many priests and Levites assisted, and seems to be the reason of the above account of them. The dedication of the wall takes in the whole city, gates, and houses (Neh. 12:30). And if a new house was to be dedicated, much more a new city, and especially the holy city, in which stood the temple of the Lord (see Deut. 20:5). This dedication was made by prayer and songs of

praise, as follow, and no doubt by sacrifices, and was kept as a festival. And indeed, according to the Jewish writers, it was annually observed on the seventh of Elul, or August. It was on the twenty fifth of that month that the wall was finished (Neh. 6:15). But the gates were not set up, and all things for the dedication were not ready till Elul, or August, following. And then all being finished, they made and served the seventh of that month as a festival.

"They sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness": To assist in the solemnity of the day both with vocal and instrumental music, as follows.

"Both with thanksgiving and with singing": With songs of praise and thankfulness vocally, that they had been able. Notwithstanding all the malice of their enemies, to build the wall in so short a time. Or with a song, perhaps the thirtieth psalm was sung on this occasion.

"With cymbals, psalteries, and with harps": Some playing on one, and some on another, which were the three principal instruments of music used by them (see 1 Chron. 15:16).

We do not know exactly when the dedication of the wall took place. Some scholars believe it was dedicated at the end of its completion. Others believe it was dedicated after Nehemiah went back to see the king of Persia. It really does not matter when it was done. Some people do not believe in dedicating things like a wall of a city. To those people who believe in God, everything they come in contact with should be dedicated to God. This dedication would be a festive occasion. There would be much singing, playing of instruments, praising God, and blowing of the victory trumpet. This was a time of thanking God for His protection. The wall was a deterrent. God is our protection, and He was theirs.

Nehemiah 12:28 "And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;"

Such of the Levites that were singers, and their sons that were trained up as such.

"Both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem": The plain of Jordan by Jericho, and the plain of Saron and Lydda.

"And from the villages of Netophathi": (See 1 Chron. 9:16). Here they dwelt, when not in their courses, to minister in the temple. But on this public occasion were summoned together.

Nehemiah 12:29 "Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem."

Which likewise was in an open, level countryside in the plains of Jericho (Deut. 11:30).

"And out of the fields of Geba": Which was a Levitical city in the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 21:17).

"And Azmaveth": The same with Beth-azmaveth (Neh. 7:28). Where it follows Anathoth and Netophah, as it does in (Ezra 2:24), and was very probably in the tribe of Benjamin.

"For the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem": That they might be near it, to do their duty when required. By which it appears that the said places were near Jerusalem.

We remember from an earlier lesson, the little towns the people lived in around Jerusalem. The singers and musicians were all Levites. The towns they had chosen to live in, would be fairly close to Jerusalem. They periodically had to come to Jerusalem to minister with their music and song.

Nehemiah 12:30 "And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall."

"Purified": See (Lev. 16:30), for the sense of moral purity in this symbolic act. By washing their bodies and their clothes, perhaps by sprinkling the water of purification on them (see Num. 8:6).

The purification of the priests and Levites was of a spiritual nature. The purification of gates and wall would be of a more physical nature.

Verses 31-42: The two "companies of them that gave thanks" were each followed by "half of the people". These groups, led by "Ezra" and Nehemiah respectively, took opposite routes around the walls to meet at the temple, surrounding the city with praise.

They probably assembled at the Valley Gate on the west. One of the choirs was led by Ezra (verse 36), the other accompanied by Nehemiah (verse 38). Moving in different directions (verse 38), they assembled together in the temple area (verse 40).

Nehemiah 12:31 "Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great [companies of them that gave] thanks, [whereof one] went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate:"

Which was so broad as to walk upon it, and there was a procession of the princes on it at its dedication, and here is described the manner of it. The princes of Benjamin must be included here.

"And appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks": He divided the people who were met together to praise God on this occasion into two companies.

"Whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall": That is, on the southern part of it.

"Toward the dung gate": Of which (see Neh. 2:13). Some Jewish writers, as Jarchi and Ben Melech, give a different sense of, which we render "two companies", and take them to be two Eucharist loaves of leavened bread, with which a rite or ceremony was performed at the enlargement of a court or city. At the utmost boundary of which those were carried, and one was eaten and the other burnt; which rite is thus described by Maimonides, "how do they add to a city? The Sanhedrim make two Eucharist sacrifices, and they take the leavened bread in them, and the Sanhedrim go after the two Eucharist sacrifices, which follow one another. And they stand with harps, and psalteries, and cymbals, at every corner and at every stone in Jerusalem, and say, I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted up, etc. (Psalm 30:1). Until they come to the end of the place they consecrate, there they stand and eat the thanksgiving loaf, one of the two, and the other is burnt" (see notes on 2:13; 3:13).

This was not just the chiefs of the Levites that climbed upon the wall, but the chiefs of the government as well. The wall was a protection for the temple, but it was also a protection for people as well. This was just saying, that people were spread across the wall.

Nehemiah 12:32 "And after them went Hoshaiiah, and half of the princes of Judah,"

The other half of them, with Hoshaiiah at the head of them.

The singers led a march of the princes. Hoshaiiah was probably speaking of Hoshea.

Nehemiah 12:33 "And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,"

Not Ezra the priest and the scribe, for he has another place assigned him in this procession (Neh. 12:36), but this seems to be one of the princes.

In the procession, next came the priests Azariah, Ezra, and then Meshullam.

Nehemiah 12:34 "Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,"

Not the tribes, but the names of the two princes, as Jarchi.

"And Shemaiah and Jeremiah": Who were two others.

This was speaking of a group of people who were from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah next. Shemaiah and Jeremiah again, were from priestly families. It appears the priests and the people were mingled in together in this procession.

Nehemiah 12:35 "And [certain] of the priests' sons with trumpets; [namely], Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph:

To blow with on this occasion; for these the priests sounded. Namely:

"Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph": Not the Levite, but a priest of this name.

Nehemiah 12:36 "And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azrael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them."

“The musical instruments of David”: This phrase could refer to the same kind of instruments David’s musicians used or the actually instruments constructed in David’s time, now being used centuries later. Compare (1 Chron. 15:16; 23:5; 2 Chron. 29:26; Ezra 3:10).

“The man of God” (see note on Deut. 33:1; compare Acts 13:22).

These trumpets would be blown in victory by the priests' sons. The musical instruments would be played, and the singers would sing praises. This procession across the wall was to be a victorious march. After this, would come another group of Levites led by Zechariah. Ezra would be acting as a scribe here.

Nehemiah 12:37 "And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward."

Of which see (Neh. 2:14), and which was to the south of the dung gate.

"They went up": That is, one of the two companies, that which took to the right on the wall. (Neh. 12:31). With which these words are to be connected.

"By the stairs of the city of David": Which went up to the city of Zion, built on an eminence.

"At the going up of the wall, above the house of David": Where the wall was higher, and there was an ascent to it.

"Even unto the water gate eastward": Turning from the south to the east, and so drew nigh the temple. (See notes on 3:26; 8:16).

This was another group, who would mount another section of the wall from the stairs that went up the inside of the wall.

Nehemiah 12:38 "And the other [company of them that gave] thanks went over against [them], and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;"

On the left hand, on the northern part of the wall. “The other company”: This second choir marched clockwise to the north (compare 12:31).

"And I after them": Nehemiah, he brought up the rear of his company, as Ezra led the van of his.

"And the half of the people upon the wall": The chief of them, for all could not walk upon it.

"From beyond the tower of the furnaces": Where they baked their bread, or their bricks (see Neh. 3:11).

"Even unto the broad wall": Where the wall was broader than common, for some reason or another (see Neh. 3:8).

Nehemiah 12:39 "And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate."

The gate which led to the tribe of Ephraim, where that tribe formerly dwelt (see Neh. 8:16).

"And above the old gate": Of which mention is made (Neh. 3:6).

"And above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate. Of all which (see Neh. 3:1). And they stood still in the prison gate; which was not a gate of the city, but of the court of the prison (Neh. 3:25). Which was near both the king's palace and the temple (see Jer. 20:1).

"Gate of Ephraim" (see note on 2:14). "Old gate" (see note on 3:6). "Fish Gate" (see note on 3:3). "Tower of Hananeel" (see note on 3:1). "Tower of Meah" (see note on 3:1). "Sheep gate" (see notes on 3:1, 32). "Prison gate": Located in the northeast section of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was with this group. They started at the same place the other group had started, and went in the opposite direction. Some of this was on the eastern wall.

Nehemiah 12:40 "So stood the two [companies of them that gave] thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:"

Having made their procession on the wall in different ways, they met in the temple. That is, in the great court of it, for no other would hold them.

"And I, and the half of the rulers with me": Nehemiah, and the other half with Hoshaiah (Neh. 12:32).

A great deal of the wall was covered with all these people. It would have been a very strong wall to hold up the weight of that many people.

Nehemiah 12:41 "And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, [and] Hananiah, with trumpets;"

They stood there also, whose names follow.

"Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets": To sound on this occasion.

These were the priests that were blowing the trumpets.

Nehemiah 12:42 "And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah [their] overseer."

These seem to be all priests that blew the trumpets.

"And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer": These were the Levites, that sung the songs of praise vocally, and raised their voices very high. Jezrahiah being precentor, who led the tune, as well as played on instruments.

The first mentioned here, were playing instruments and the singers were singing. This had to be a tremendous, victorious sound of praise rising up to God.

Nehemiah 12:43 "Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

"For God had made them rejoice with great joy": The God of all joy (compare 1 Chron. 12:40; Neh. 8:10; Psalms 16:11; 33:1; 43:4; Gal. 5:22), activated their inner joy which brought corporate celebration. Though these may have been few and far between, moments like this characterized the life of obedience and blessing which God had set before Israel.

It was a long-standing tradition to sacrifice at dedications. Nehemiah completed the dedication by the priests offering tremendous numbers of sacrifices. Everyone participated. This was a time of national joy and triumph. Another time the women had participated in a time of tremendous joy, had been just after the crossing of the Red Sea.

Verses 44-47: A listing of miscellaneous temple activities is given. A pattern of obedience and covenantal living was instilled in the everyday life of the people, favorable, stable conditions comparable to those of the time of "David, Solomon," and "Asaph".

Nehemiah 12:44 "And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited."

On the selfsame day the dedication was; while the people were in a good disposition, and a suitable frame for such service. Certain persons from among the priests were appointed to be overseers of the chambers fixed upon for treasuries. To lay up safe in them the following things, and take care of them, that they were put to the use for which they were designed.

"For the offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites": What by the law of God were assigned them for their maintenance, and which the people had lately bound themselves to bring in (Neh. 10:35). "The portions of the law": Compare (Lev. 7:34-36; Deut. 18:1-5).

"For Judah rejoiced for the priests, and for the Levites that waited. At the temple, and performed their services there. They were so pleased with their ministrations that day, that they were determined to take care of them, and provide well for them. And that nothing should be wanting to them, enjoined by the law of God, and that they might not be obliged to dwell in fields and villages for the sake of their living (Neh. 12:28).

Perhaps we can safely assume that Nehemiah did some of the appointing. Some of these things were of a spiritual consequence, so we may assume the High-Priest appointed some of those men. We know the law had been read to all of the people, so there would be no excuse for not giving the portion that was their obligation to give. The priests and the Levites lived off these offerings. The priests and the Levites were not allowed to work aside from in the service of the LORD. They waited until the offerings were made to receive their portion.

Nehemiah 12:45 "And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, [and] of Solomon his son."

The singers kept their turns in course in the temple, and were not wanting to officiate on all occasions, besides morning and evening services. And the porters they diligently kept the gates of the temple, that no impure person or thing in a ceremonial sense entered.

"According to the commandment of David, and Solomon his son": Who made very good rules and orders relative to the better and more regular performance of service by them (see 1 Chron. 25:1).

The singers and the porters were in the service of the LORD. They did not have other occupations. They lived off the daily portions that were allotted to them. They were purified, as were the priests, because they were in the service of the LORD. David and Solomon had instituted the musicians and the doorkeepers in the temple that Solomon built.

Nehemiah 12:46 "For in the days of David and Asaph of old [there were] chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."

Persons appointed over the rest to instruct them, and see that they did their work aright, as besides Asaph, Haman, and Jeduthun, and their sons (1 Chron. 25:2).

"And songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God": Such were made by them, some under divine inspiration, which bear the names of David and Asaph, as may be observed in the book of Psalms.

The book of Psalms is a book of songs to be sung in worship. Asaph was the head of the singers in the temple in Solomon's temple. Many of the Psalms speak as being from Asaph. David felt that thanksgiving and praise in song was a vital part of worship. He was a singer and a musician himself. He wrote most of the Psalms, which are songs.

Nehemiah 12:47 "And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified [holy things] unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified [them] unto the children of Aaron."

While these two men governed they did their duty, and punctually paid the Levites their dues at the proper time.

"And they sanctified holy things unto the Levites": Set them apart for their use, and brought them to them, their offerings, firstfruits, and tithes. And the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron. The Levites set apart the tenth part of the tithes, and delivered them to the priests, and so each had what belonged to them.

"The children of Aaron": The priests.

This was explaining that the singers and musicians had a daily portion. The Levites received of the things offered on the altar. The High-Priest and the priests received of the offerings of the altar, also.

Nehemiah Chapter 12 Questions

1. Who was the High-Priest in Zerubbabel's time?
2. Which High-Priest was murdered by Nebuchadnezzar?
3. Who was descended from Abijah?
4. Who was Elisabeth, mother of John, descended from?
5. Who were Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel?

6. When was Eliashib High-Priest?
7. Who did Jonathan murder to become High-Priest?
8. Which of the priests did not put their mark on the covenant?
9. There were records kept of all the heads of families of the Hebrews, especially of whom?
10. Why did the genealogies become unimportant after Jesus?
11. Nehemiah was a _____ leader in the office of governor.
12. When were the two times people believe the wall was dedicated?
13. To all who believe in God, _____ should be dedicated.
14. The singers and musicians were all _____.
15. Who were purified for the dedication of the wall?
16. Who were some of the people who would be on the wall?
17. Did the ordinary people get on the wall?
18. Who blew the trumpets?
19. What kind of songs would they sing?
20. Who led the second group to mount the wall?
21. Name the priests that blew the trumpets.
22. Who was involved in all of the rejoicing that was going on?
23. Who did the appointing in verse 44?
24. Who got a daily portion?
25. When did much of the ministry of singing begin?
26. What are the Psalms?