

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH 12

This chapter gives an account of the chief of the priests and Levites in the days of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, and Nehemiah, (^{<1622>}Nehemiah 12:1-26), of the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, and of the joy expressed on that occasion, (^{<1627>}Nehemiah 12:27-43), and of the appointment of some persons over the treasuries for the priests, Levites, singers, and porters, (^{<1624>}Nehemiah 12:44-47).

Ver. 1. *Now these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua*, etc.] 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, (^{<3801>}Zechariah 3:1), the names of the priests are given in this and the six following verses:

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, (^{<1500>}Ezra 7:1,6,7), though this by some ^{f74} is not thought very probable.

Ver. 2-7. *Amariah, Malluch, Hattush*, etc.] Whose names are among the sealers of the covenant, (^{<1603>}Nehemiah 10:3,4). Malluch is afterwards called Melicu, (^{<1624>}Nehemiah 12:14),

Shechaniah, called Shebaniah, (^{<1624>}Nehemiah 12:14) and so in (^{<1604>}Nehemiah 10:4)

Rehum, who, by transposition of letters, is Harim, (^{<1625>}Nehemiah 12:15), and so in (^{<1605>}Nehemiah 10:5).

Meremoth, called Meraioth, (^{<1625>}Nehemiah 12:15),

Iddo, Ginnetho, read Ginnethon, (^{<1626>}Nehemiah 12:16) so in (^{<1606>}Nehemiah 10:6).

Abijah; there was a course of a priest of this name, of which Zechariah the father of John the Baptist was, (^{<4106>}Luke 1:5).

Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah; the first two are called Miniamin and Moadiah, (^{<4627>}Nehemiah 12:17).

Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, Sallu; called Sallai, (^{<4621>}Nehemiah 12:20).

Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah these were the chief of the priests, and of their brethren, in the days of Jeshua; heads of courses; or, however, priests of the greatest note in the times of Jeshua the high priest.

Ver. 8. *Moreover the Levites*, etc.] Who lived in the same times: were

Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah; most of these are made mention of in (^{<4687>}Nehemiah 8:7 10:9,10 11:15,17), 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.

Ver. 9. *Also Bakkukiah and Unni*, etc.] Two other Levites; the first is mentioned in (^{<46117>}Nehemiah 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, (^{<4326>}1 Chronicles 23:6 26:12).

Ver. 10,11. *And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begot Joiada, and Joiada begot 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 ¹⁷⁵ 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 favours, 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 ^{<4628>}Nehemiah 13:28), and to reach no further than to the thirty second of

Darius Hystaspis, (^{<1631b>}Nehemiah 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 (^{<1339b>}1 Chronicles 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.

Ver. 12-21. *And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers,* etc.] 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 follow, 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, 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.

Ver. 22. The Levites, in the days of Eliashib, etc.] 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, (^{<1621b>}Nehemiah 12:11) and whom Josephus^{f76} also calls Joannes:

and Jaddua; the same as in (^{<1620b>}Nehemiah 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; thought to be Darius Codomannus, the last king of the Persian monarchy, whom Alexander conquered; and if so, this verse must be inserted after the death of Nehemiah, and as the next verse also seems to be; for these two verses interrupt the natural order of the relation: an account is given of the priests in the times of Joiakim, (^{<1622b>}Nehemiah 12:12-21), these verses being inserted, the account goes on, (^{<1624b>}Nehemiah 12:24), etc. of the chief of the Levites in the times of Joiakim only.

Ver. 23. *The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the chronicles,* etc.] Some think this refers to (^{<394>}1 Chronicles 9:14), etc.

until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib; from whence Dr. Lightfoot ^{f77} concludes, that the Chronicles were written by Ezra in the times of this Johanan.

Ver. 24. *And the chief of the Levites,* etc.] Here the thread of the history of Nehemiah, interrupted by the insertion of the two preceding verses, is carried from the priests to the Levites in the times of the third high priest:

Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel; these were singers, since it follows:

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; which office of theirs they performed by turns in courses, as David under a divine direction ordered, (see ^{<4216>}1 Chronicles 23:5,6).

Ver. 25. *Mattaniah, and Bakkukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters,* etc.] At the gates of the temple, (see ^{<4915>}1 Chronicles 9:15-17),

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, (^{<4365>}1 Chronicles 26:15,17).

Ver. 26. *These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 27. *And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem,* etc.] 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, (^{<4623>}Nehemiah 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 ^{<15115>}Deuteronomy 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 ^{f78}, 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, (^{<16165>}Nehemiah 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 ^{<131516>}1 Chronicles 15:16).

Ver. 28. *And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together,* etc.] 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 ^{<131916>}1 Chronicles 9:16), here they dwelt, when not in their courses, to minister in the temple; but on this public occasion were summoned together.

Ver. 29. *Also from the house of Gilgal,* etc.] Which likewise was in a champaign country in the plains of Jericho, (^{<16113>}Deuteronomy 11:30 ^{<11111>}Joshua 5:9,10),

and out of the fields of Geba; which was a Levitical city in the tribe of Benjamin, (^{<12117>}Joshua 21:17)

and Azmaveth; the same with Bethazmaveth, (^{<14128>}Nehemiah 7:28) where it follows Anathoth and Netophah, as it does in (^{<13124>}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.

Ver. 30. *And the priests and the Levites purified themselves,* etc.] By washing their bodies and their clothes, perhaps by sprinkling the water of purification on them, (see ^{<4085>}Numbers 8:6,7,21 19:9).

Ver. 31. *Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall,* etc.] 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:

towards the dung gate; of which (see ^{<4423>}Nehemiah 2:13) some Jewish writers, as Jarchi and Ben Melech, give a different sense of **twdwt yt**, which we render “two companies”, and take them to be two eucharistical 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 ^{f79}; which rite is thus described by Maimonides ^{f80},

“how do they add to a city? the sanhedrim make two eucharistical sacrifices, and they take the leavened bread in them, and the sanhedrim go after the two eucharistical 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. ((^{<4801>}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.”

Ver. 32. *And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah.*] The other half of them, with Hoshaiah at the head of them.

Ver. 33. *And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam.*] Not Ezra the priest and the scribe, for he has another place assigned him in this procession, (^{<4123>}Nehemiah 12:36), but this seems to be one of the princes.

Ver. 34. *Judah and Benjamin,* etc.] Not the tribes, but the names of the two princes, as Jarchi:

and Shemaiah and Jeremiah; who were two others.

Ver. 35. *And certain of the priests' sons with trumpets,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 36. *And his brethren,* etc.] The brethren of Zechariah, the priest's son, and such are those that follow:

Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; which were invented by him, and ordered by him to be used in religious service, under the divine direction:

and Ezra the scribe before them; for he being a priest also, and a man of great eminence, was placed at the head of them in this procession.

Ver. 37. *And at the fountain gate, which was over against them,* etc.] Of which (see ^{<4124>}Nehemiah 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, (^{<4125>}Nehemiah 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; of which (see ^{<4126>}Nehemiah 3:26 8:16) turning from the south to the east, and so drew nigh the temple.

Ver. 38. *And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them,* etc.] On the left hand, on the northern part of the wall:

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 ^{<46B1>}Nehemiah 3:11),

even unto the broad wall; where the wall was broader than common, for some reason or another, (see ^{<46B8>}Nehemiah 3:8).

Ver. 39. *And from above the gate of Ephraim,* etc.] The gate which led to the tribe of Ephraim, where that tribe formerly dwelt, (see ^{<46B6>}Nehemiah 8:16)

and above the old gate; of which mention is made, (^{<46B6>}Nehemiah 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 ^{<46B1>}Nehemiah 3:1,2), and they stood still in the prison gate; which was not a gate of the city, but of the court of the prison, (^{<46B5>}Nehemiah 3:25), which was near both the king's palace and the temple, (see ^{<46A1>}Jeremiah 20:1,2 32:2).

Ver. 40. *So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God,* etc.] 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 Hoshaiiah, (^{<46B2>}Nehemiah 12:32).

Ver. 41. *And the priests,* etc.] They stood there also, whose names follow:

Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; to sound on this occasion.

Ver. 42. *And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 43. *Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced*, etc.] Or many sacrifices, as Ben Melech interprets it; and these perhaps of the larger sort of cattle, oxen; and which, at least many of them, being peace offerings, the people feasted on them, so that it was a festival day:

for God had made them rejoice with great joy; on account of the wall being set up all around, and so were in greater safety from their enemies:

the wives also and the children rejoiced; while the priests blew the trumpets, and the singers sung and played on their instruments, the women and children gave loud shouts for joy:

so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off; as at the laying of the foundation of the temple, (^{<13813>}Ezra 3:13).

Ver. 44. *And at that time were some appointed over the chamber for the treasuries*, etc.] 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, (^{<14005>}Nehemiah 10:35-39),

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, (^{<14228>}Nehemiah 12:28,29 13:10).

Ver. 45. *And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of their purification,* etc.] 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 ^{<1291>}1 Chronicles 25:1 26:1 ^{<1484>}2 Chronicles 8:14).

Ver. 46. *For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers,* etc.] 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, (^{<1321>}1 Chronicles 25:2-8)

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.

Ver. 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,* etc.] While these two men governed they did their duty, and punctually paid the Levites their dues at the proper season:

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.