

SERMON FOCUS: My worship must celebrate the completed work.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will discover a connection between the celebration of the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem and the celebration in heaven at the end of days.

BACKGROUND:

As we've been going through the book of Nehemiah, we've seen the wall being rebuilt through much opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. God is with the Israelites through the whole thing and enables them to complete the wall. This enables them to worship God in the holy city and resettle God's people in this city.

SCRIPTURE READING: Nehemiah 12:27-43

At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sent for the Levites wherever they lived and brought them to Jerusalem to celebrate the joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. [28](#)The singers gathered from the region around Jerusalem, from the settlements of the Netophathites, [29](#)from Beth-gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for they had built settlements for themselves around Jerusalem. [30](#)After the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the city gates, and the wall.

[31](#)Then I brought the leaders of Judah up on top of the wall, and I appointed two large processions that gave thanks. One went to the right on the wall, toward the Dung Gate. [32](#)Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed, [33](#)along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, [34](#)Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, [35](#)and some

of the priests' sons with trumpets, and Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph followed [36](#)as well as his relatives — Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe went in front of them. [37](#)At the Fountain Gate they climbed the steps of the city of David on the ascent of the wall and went above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

[38](#)The second thanksgiving procession went to the left, and I followed it with half the people along the top of the wall, past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, [39](#)above the Ephraim Gate, and by the Old Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate. They stopped at the Gate of the Guard. [40](#)The two thanksgiving processions stood in the house of God. So did I and half of the officials accompanying me, [41](#)as well as the priests:

1. Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin,
2. Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah,
3. and Hananiah, with trumpets;
4. [42](#)and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar,
5. Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer.

Then the singers sang, with Jezrahiah as the leader. [43](#)On that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. The women and children also celebrated, and Jerusalem's rejoicing was heard far away.

INTRODUCTION:

In the season 2 episode of Flashpoint titled "Clean Hands," the SRU is tasked with protecting a serial killer who is being brought back from Germany to face the consequences of what he has done. Donna, new to the team, asks Wordy how he feels about protecting someone like that. She asks, "When you think of your daughters now, what do you want to do to him?" Wordy

replies, "I guess, uh... When I go home tonight and I hold my baby girl, it's got to be with clean hands."

Do we ever think about if our hands are clean? I'm talking about those things that we do. Do we ask ourselves that question when it's time to approach God in worship? Do we pay attention to the fact that in order to worship God that we must be purified? Let's look at what this meant to the Israelites and what it means to us.

MESSAGE:

1. I MUST BE PURIFIED

- a. (12:30) **After the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the city gates, and the wall.**
- b. Purification involves:
 - i. Recognizing and removing uncleanness
 - ii. A symbolic washing with water
- c. The priests and Levites were responsible for ceremonial purification by law.
- d. We become clean through the removal of our sins (repentance). We also see the symbolic washing with water in the baptism ceremony.
- e. Jesus Peter in John 13:8, **"If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."** He said this after Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet.
- f. He also tells us in John 15:3, **"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."**
- g. We must approach our Lord with clean hands and clean hearts in order to worship Him.
- h. Our sin is not allowed in His presence; therefore we must be cleansed from it.
- i. Not only do we see that I must be purified, but also we see from this celebration that I must participate in worship.

2. I MUST PARTICIPATE

- a. This dedication ceremony was a huge deal.
- b. “The circumambulation of the walls is carried out by to processions starting at the same place, walking along the top of the wall in opposite directions, and meeting finally in the temple area. Each procession has a choir, a group of lay nobles, seven priests, and eight Levite musicians. With vocal music in front and instrumental music in the rear, they must have been enveloped in stereophonic sound. The ceremony concludes with many sacrifices (12:43).” (Meeks 1993)
- c. These choirs, priests, singers, and musicians were not worshipping on behalf of the people of Israel. They were leading the worship of the people of Israel.
- d. Many churches have a concert mentality about the worship services.
 - i. The singers perform and the people listen
 - ii. The instrumentalists perform and people listen
 - iii. The preacher performs and the people listen
- e. (12:43) **The women and children also celebrated, and Jerusalem’s rejoicing was heard far away.**
- f. It’s important that the celebration was heard far away. It was heard far enough was that their enemies heard the celebration. Like the people of Israel, I must celebrate the completed work.

3. I MUST CELEBRATE THE COMPLETED WORK

- a. (12:43) **On that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy.**
- b. “Let it suffice to have said that those who completed the gates, towers and city wall amid

great toil, hardship, famine, cold and vigils by day and night while the tireless enemy fights against and assails them, afterwards, once the enemy has been beaten back and thrown into disarray, go walking together through the gates, towers and buildings of this city and rejoice with songs, hymns, harps, cymbals, lyres, and trumpets and thanksgivings together with those very teachers who were the authors of the project and the teachers of God's law." (Bede 735)

- c. God had defeated the plans of the enemies and completed the work. This called for his people to celebrate.
- d. We also celebrate a completed work. Jesus says in John 19:30, "**It is finished.**" At that point, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
- e. What was Jesus talking about? His sacrifice as the payment for our sins. Of course, without the resurrection, we could not be assured that our sins were forgiven. But He returned as He said He would, and He is going to return again.
- f. Like Israel was celebrating the defeat of their enemy and the completion of the wall, we can and **must** celebrate the defeat of our enemy Satan and the completion of our salvation.
- g. Revelation 21 tells us about a new Jerusalem where, "God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, because the previous things have passed away."
- h. We will surely be participating in such a celebration as we have read about today on a much bigger scale.

CONCLUSION:

- Have you been purified? Has Christ removed your sins and given you eternal life?
- Do you participate in worship? Do you worship in Spirit and in Truth?
- Do you celebrate the completed work that we can see?

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