



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO MAKE YOURS

REFLECTION POINTS 23 AUG 2020

NEHEMIAH 12:27-43 (EDITED)

“ Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. ²⁸The companies of the singers gathered together from the circuit around Jerusalem and from the different villages and regions; for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. ³⁰And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

31 Then I brought the leaders of Judah up on to the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession. One went to the right on the wall to the Dung Gate; ³²and after them went Hoshaiiah and half the officials of Judah, ³³and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, ³⁵and some of the young priests with trumpets, ³⁶and other priests with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and the scribe Ezra went in front of them. ³⁷At the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went straight up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

38 The other company of those who gave thanks went to the left, and I followed them with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, ³⁹and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard. ⁴⁰So both companies of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me, ⁴¹the priests with trumpets, ⁴²and

other priests without. And the singers sang with their leader. ⁴³They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

REFLECTION POINTS

It is thought that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally together and so should be read together – Ezra the prophet and Nehemiah the builder, working together and with their own specific roles.

There were 3 stages of reconstruction or rebuilding:

- the reconstruction of the temple and altar which is described in the book of Ezra;
- then the reconstruction of the community as the people of God described in both Ezra and Nehemiah;
- and finally the reconstruction of the walls in Nehemiah.

At each stage, there are obstacles to be overcome with God's help - times of uncertainty, challenge, discovery, relearning.

This continual story of destruction and reconstruction throughout the Bible and throughout church history tells the story of the everchanging nature of the church.

What are the changes in church you have witnessed over the years? Have you noticed differences in ecumenical relations? What rituals and traditions do you value and which have you left behind? Do you know why that happened? Have your views or feelings changed over time?

The dedication ritual can be seen as symbolic of new beginnings which carries the past into the present and future. It isn't about having arrived at a destination, but about beginning something new.

The people need to renew the Covenant before the dedication of the walls can take place. Why?

This is a story about God's faithfulness – are any of our sacred stories about anything else?

What of your own story is about God's faithfulness?