

June 8, 2025

Nehemiah 12:1-26

These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, ³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, ⁴ Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, ⁵ Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, ⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

⁸ And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. ⁹ And Bakbukiah and Unni and their brothers stood opposite them in the service. ¹⁰ And Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, ¹¹ Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

¹² And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' houses: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; ¹³ of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; ¹⁴ of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; ¹⁵ of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; ¹⁶ of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; ¹⁷ of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; ¹⁸ of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; ¹⁹ of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; ²⁰ of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; ²¹ of Hilkiyah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel. ²² In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the Levites were recorded as heads of fathers' houses; so too were the priests in the reign of Darius the Persian. ²³ As for the sons of Levi, their heads of fathers' houses were written in the Book of the Chronicles until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. ²⁴ And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch. ²⁵ Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storehouses of the gates. ²⁶ These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra, the priest and scribe.



The Hand of God in the Worship of God Nehemiah 12:1-26

BIG IDEA: From generation to generation, God raised up priests and Levites to lead His people in worship—but all of history was preparing the way for the perfect Priest, Jesus, who now leads us in eternal worship before the Father.

OUTLINE

1. Priests (V. 1-7; 12 –21)

2. Levites (v. 8 –11; 22 – 26)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What moments or achievements are social media worthy to you?
- 2 What clues can you find from the text (Nehemiah 12:1-26) that it is about a great celebration?
3. What are some possible reasons that Nehemiah had for leading the people to dedicate to the Lord the work that they had accomplished? What major accomplishments or milestones merit setting aside a time to dedicate or celebrate the Lord’s hand in bringing you to this moment?
4. Read verse 12:24. Nehemiah writes, “according to the commandment of David, the man of God”. What might Nehemiah hope to accomplish by linking the dedication of the wall to King David?
5. Think of occasions when you might have praise for the people God has used in your life who have shown you great things about Himself (like salvation, deliverance, affliction, or His provision to make this moment possible). How might you use technology to share with the world about God’s work in your life?

Praise to Jesus. Spend time remembering, praising, and singing songs to God for his faithfulness, provision, and purpose in key moments in your life. Praise Him for sending Jesus to make a way for you to worship Him in spirit and truth!

Repentance through Jesus. Today, spend time in confession and repentance for the times you forgot God's faithfulness in the past and gave in to fear about the future, or failed to give God credit for the achievements he helped you accomplish.

Consecration to Jesus. The hand of God is leading, providing, and protecting His children. Let us praise & dedicate each achievement in life to him, by him, and for him, and in so doing share at home, at work, in your neighborhood, and around the world how Jesus paved our way to God and the reality that Jesus can do the same for them.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before the climactic dedication of the wall, the book looks back to trace one strong thread through the story of the returning exiles. The unbroken Levitical line shows God's preservation of the people's ability to worship and be purified as he intended. God's faithfulness makes the way for his people to worship him, as they do in the subsequent scene.

- ESV Study Bible

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. Who were the Levites? (They are one of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were dedicated as priests for Israel to organize and coordinate the worship and sacrifices in the tabernacle and then the Temple.)
2. Why do you think Nehemiah included this passage about the Levites? (This shows the centrality and the importance of worship of the Lord God for the Israelites.)
3. How central is Lord's Day worship in your family?
4. How did Jesus fulfill the role of the Great High Priest? What is part of His current role in heaven as the Great High Priest? (Jesus fulfilled the role as the Great High Priest with His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15) and His offering of Himself on the cross as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In His current role, He is interceding for us with God the Father. (Hebrews 7:25))

Scriptures for further study:

1 Chronicles 23

2 Chronicles 8:14

Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 7:22-25

Hebrews 10:19-25

1 John 4:10

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

1 Chronicles 23

2 Chronicles 8:14-15

Psalms 134

Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 7:22-25

1 Peter 2:9

Revelation 5:9-10

1. Why do you think Nehemiah took the time to list out the names of priests and Levites in this passage? What does that show us about God's view of worship and those who serve Him?
2. What do you notice about the different roles the priests and Levites played in Israel's worship life? How were they set apart, and what does that say about the seriousness of worship?
3. How does the history of priests and Levites ultimately point us to Jesus? What does it mean that Jesus is our Great High Priest today? (See Hebrews 4:14-16)
4. What are some ways people today worship or serve God in ways that might never get attention or public recognition? How can we be faithful like the "associates" mentioned in Nehemiah 12:24?
5. Think of a time when God showed up in a big way—through provision, guidance, healing, or salvation. Did you take time to dedicate that moment to Him? What would it look like to do that now?
6. How can you use your gifts—like music, creativity, or even your social media—to reflect God's faithfulness and give Him praise this week?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. Nehemiah 12:24 mentions certain named Levites, and then refers to “their associates” without identifying these individuals.

QUESTION: For most of us, our work for the Lord will be done in obscurity, and perhaps unremembered by future generations. Why is it sometimes hard for us to do things that no one knows about or no one gives us credit for? How does it help us to know that the Lord does notice, and that the things we do for him do, in fact, matter, and do indeed make a lasting difference in the lives of others?

2. Nehemiah 12:24 also describes two choirs facing each other, singing praises and thanks antiphonally. (See also the remainder of Nehemiah chapter 12 regarding the musical celebrations of the Israelites. And 50X in the Psalms we are told to “sing God’s praises,” like in Psalm 47:6. Right to the very end of the Bible—into eternity—we see God’s people singing, like in Revelation 5:9, 12, 13.)

QUESTION: Why do you think music is so important to the Lord and so important to our worship?

QUESTION: In what ways does music encourage and inspire us?

QUESTION: When you consider the music you most often listen to, would you describe it as positive and uplifting? Is it glorifying to God?

QUESTION: How do you define good worship music? Oftentimes, our answer to this question has more to do with our preferences. What if, instead, we were to think of “good” or “best” music as that music which helps people genuinely and consistently magnify the greatness of Jesus Christ in our hearts, minds, and wills?

The Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People



The Ancient of Days, William Blake, 1794.

About the artwork and artist.

The Ancient of Days, found in prophecies of Daniel, is the subject of William Blake's engraving in which he shows us the Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People, the sermon series title for Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Ancient of Days is the cover art for Blake's Poem Europe: a Prophecy (1794). The Ancient of Days is a name for God the Father, whom the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7, where he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Blake's poem "Europe", depicts a world filled with suffering based on the political climate of Europe and politics in England in the 1790s. It is appropriate in light of the suffering of God's people described in Ezra and Nehemiah. The artwork by Blake serves to remind and encourage God's people to know that He is still active and on the move with His plan of redemption despite their surroundings and circumstances. William Blake (1757-1827) was committed to connecting the prophecies and visions of the God of the Bible with the events in his country; the poet, printmaker, and painter was unrecognized and died impoverished. Despite their circumstances, William and his devoted wife Catherine, whom he taught to read and write, enjoyed a happy marriage and life together.

Today, William Blake is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language and one of the most original visual artists of his day.

Barker, (2004) (Barker, William Blake 1757-1827, 2004)

Introduction to Nehemiah

From January to May 2024, we heard sermons from the Book of Ezra. The introduction to Ezra, recorded sermons, and discipleship resources can be found on our church website at this address; <https://www.fpcrome.org/pdd-ezra/>

Ezra and Nehemiah were, for centuries, received as one book narrating the return of God's exiled people to their land, as under Persian rule they were allowed to resettle and rebuild Jerusalem. These two books cover three different waves of returning exiles, from 538 to 433 BC. But they tell one story: the restoration of God's covenant people according to his Word—which they are now called afresh to obey.

This restoration required, first of all, the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstitution of ceremonial worship. The first leader, Zerubbabel, led the initial wave of exiles back to Jerusalem to accomplish this goal (Ezra 1–6). The second wave came more than half a century later, led by Ezra, who rebuilt not the temple but the people, teaching them—and calling them to obey—the law of Moses (Ezra 7–10).

Thirteen years after Ezra arrived, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. He first led the people to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 1–6). Then, along with Ezra, he sought to restore the people (Nehemiah 7–13) as God's holy nation, followers of his Word.

The restoration was not complete, however. These books picture God's people regathered but struggling; they are poor subjects of a foreign king; their city is devastated; enemies oppress from without; sin threatens from within. We see the faithful hand of God mercifully preserving his people according to his promises. We also see the dire need for the perfect fulfillment of God's promises in the salvation accomplished by his Son. (For further background, see the ESV Study Bible.)