

BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS

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People say to me, "How do you build a church?" You don't build a church, you build a believer. As a result, the church will build itself. (John MacArthur).

Text
Nehemiah 12

Topic
Two choirs walk along the top of the wall surrounding Jerusalem worshiping and praising God in a dedication service

Title
Dedicated Men Walking

Nehemiah 12:1 Now these *are* the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah 12:2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Nehemiah 12:3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, Nehemiah 12:4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, Nehemiah 12:5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, Nehemiah 12:6 Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, Nehemiah 12:7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, *and* Jedaiah. These *were* the heads of the priests and their brethren in the days of Jeshua. Nehemiah 12:8 Moreover the Levites *were* Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, *and* Mattaniah *who led* the thanksgiving *psalms*, he and his brethren. Nehemiah 12:9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *stood* across from them in *their* duties. Nehemiah 12:10 Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Eliashib, Eliashib begot Joiada, Nehemiah 12:11 Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua. Nehemiah 12:12 Now in the days of Joiakim, the priests, the heads of the fathers' *houses were*: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; Nehemiah 12:13 of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; Nehemiah 12:14 of Melichu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; Nehemiah 12:15 of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; Nehemiah 12:16 of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; Nehemiah 12:17 of Abijah, Zichri; *the son of* Minjamin; of Moadiah, Piltai; Nehemiah 12:18 of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; Nehemiah 12:19 of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; Nehemiah 12:20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; Nehemiah 12:21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; *and* of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

Nehemiah 12:22 During the reign of Darius the Persian, a record *was also kept* of the Levites and priests *who had been* heads of their fathers' *houses* in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua.

Nehemiah 12:23 The sons of Levi, the heads of the fathers' *houses* until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, *were* written in the book of the chronicles.

Nehemiah 12:24 And the heads of the Levites *were* Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise *and* give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God.

Nehemiah 12:25 Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub *were* gatekeepers keeping the watch at the storerooms of the gates.

Nehemiah 12:26 These *lived* 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.

Nehemiah 12:27 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 gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, *with* cymbals and stringed instruments and harps.

Nehemiah 12:28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites,

Nehemiah 12:29 from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem.

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

Nehemiah 12:31 So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. *One* went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate.

Nehemiah 12:32 After them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah,

Nehemiah 12:33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam;

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

Nehemiah 12:35 and some of the priests' sons with trumpets - 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,

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

Nehemiah 12:37 By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water Gate eastward.

Nehemiah 12:38 The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite *way*, and I *was* behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall,

Nehemiah 12:39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison.

Nehemiah 12:40 So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me;
Nehemiah 12:41 and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;
Nehemiah 12:42 also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director.
Nehemiah 12:43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.
Nehemiah 12:44 And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.
Nehemiah 12:45 Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son.
Nehemiah 12:46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.
Nehemiah 12:47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated *holy things* for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated *them* for the children of Aaron.

Introduction

Rock...Rap... Reggae... Classical & country; jazz & blues; hip-hop & pop. There are a *lot* of musical styles.

Too bad we can't ask God what style of music He prefers! Since worship is for Him, not us, His answer would immediately resolve the struggle that many Churches and denominations have over which style or styles of worship they should adopt.

Should we be singing the great hymns of the Church? Or is it OK to worship God with contemporary choruses?

We're going to talk a little about this as we work through our text. We'll say that here **is** a style of music that God prefers! We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 God Appoints Your Style Of Praise And Worship, and #2 God Anoints Your Sacrifice Of Praise And Worship

#1 God Appoints Your Style Of Praise And Worship (v1-26 & 44-47)

The wall surrounding Jerusalem had been completed. It was time to dedicate it with a service of praise and worship.

Before the service is described, the chapter gives you several lists of the priests and their helpers, the Levites, from various time periods. The purpose of this listing of names is what we are interested in. Look at verse twenty-four:

Nehemiah 12:24 And the heads of the Levites *were* Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise *and* give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God.

Then look, too, at verses eight and nine:

Nehemiah 12:8 Moreover the Levites *were* Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, *and* Mattaniah *who led* the thanksgiving *psalms*, he and his brethren.
Nehemiah 12:9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *stood* across from them in *their* duties.

First of all, you read about **group alternating with group** in their praise and worship as they **stood across from** one another. This was a particular style of worship – a way of singing praises to worship the Lord. - *being changed to bring change* -

Second, you are told that this style was according to the command of **David the man of God**. David, when he came to power as king over a united Israel, revolutionized worship among the Jews. I'm not sure what they did before David was king - but I know that they didn't sing his psalms, **group alternating with group**, standing **across from** one another!

It was David who originally organized the priests and Levites into twenty-four rotations in their service in the Temple. This list in Nehemiah is of twenty-two rotations. Nehemiah was re-establishing Davidic worship. This was God's appointed style of worship for their generations.

God had given David many psalms; God would give him more. These became the new songs, and the new style, of worship.

David also introduced, and may have even created, new instruments into Jewish praise and worship. In Second Chronicles 29:26-27 you read,

2 Chronicles 29:26 The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

2 Chronicles 29:27 Then Hezekiah commanded *them* to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD *also* began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel.

David introduced metrical psalms, sung in a style that is called *antiphonal*, and accompanied by trumpets as well as other instruments. You've got to assume the other instruments include the lyre, an ancient guitar, because we know that David was a proficient lyre-player.

Let's read verses forty-four through forty-seven. They belong to this section in that they fill us in about the re-established Davidic worship.

Nehemiah 12:44 And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.

Nehemiah 12:45 Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David *and* Solomon his son.

Nehemiah 12:46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Nehemiah 12:47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated *holy things* for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated *them* for the children of Aaron.

David's fingerprints were all over Jewish worship. The framework and format for praise and worship was **appointed** by God through the **command** of King David. There's no doubt that God gave David the psalms, and the skill to play them, and the ability to arrange them, and the instruments to accompany them. It was a revolution in praise and worship that Nehemiah was restoring.

Hold this thought for a moment, and we will return to it. Since God is the One we worship, it is His prerogative to establish the framework and the format for doing so. Styles of worship are appointed by Him. We simply recognize them.

That brings us to our second point:

#2 God Anoints Your Sacrifice Of Praise And Worship (v27-43)

Let's survey the dedication service recorded in this chapter, beginning with verse twenty-seven. We'll see a little bit of what it means to bring God a sacrifice of praise and worship.

Nehemiah 12:27 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 gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, *with* cymbals and stringed instruments and harps.

Nehemiah 12:28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, Nehemiah 12:29 from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem.

Since this was to be a very special service of praise and worship, they got *everyone* together for it, not just the regular rotation of priests and Levites. One principle we derive from their celebration is that God loves to be approached by His people through their singing and praising Him with instruments.

You may or may not like to sing; but God likes to hear you sing, **so step up to the mic!** Participation in congregational singing **is** a sacrifice you are called upon to make for God.

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

Their purification involved things like abstaining from sexual relations; washing their clothes; taking a bath; and bringing an offering.

Why abstain from sexual relations in marriage? It wasn't because sex was somehow evil or wrong. It was to remind them that, on a spiritual level, God was their great love.

I'm not telling you to abstain from sex before coming to Church... But you might want to wash your clothes, take a bath, and bring an offering! The principle being stressed is that coming to worship the Lord involves a measure of preparation at home and in your family. It involves a sacrifice of your time and certain activities in order to be ready to greet the Lord with singing.

Look with me at verses thirty-one and thirty-eight:

Nehemiah 12:31 So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate....

Nehemiah 12:38 ...The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall,

Two thanksgiving choirs walked along the top of the wall, in opposite directions of one another. Ezra led one; Nehemiah came behind the other. Then, according to verse forty, they met at the Temple:

Nehemiah 12:40 So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me;

How was this a sacrifice of praise and worship? Obviously it took a lot of planning and rehearsing to pull this off. Time away from home and other important activities were sacrificed in order to be ready for the dedication service.

Worship leaders and their teams should pay close attention to this. But, in our case, this applies to everyone, because **we are all part of the choir!** The congregation is the choir!

You can plan and rehearse for our worship services. For example: Get the worship CDs and familiarize yourself with the songs we sing. The result of their sacrifice was that God anointed their praise and worship service:

Nehemiah 12:41 and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;
Nehemiah 12:42 also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director.
Nehemiah 12:43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.

God had made them rejoice with great joy. It doesn't mean He forced them; it means He anointed and blessed their praise and worship with a sense of His presence and power.

Their praise and worship became a testimony to unbelievers as [the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off](#). It was an outdoor service, and their singing accompanied by instruments was heard far away. One commentator called their praise the 'shout' heard 'round the world.

Does this mean we should be loud? Maybe; sometimes. It definitely means we should be *exuberant* and *expressive* as we sing.

More than that, it is telling us that our zeal for praise and worship can be a powerful testimony to unbelievers as they see and hear us lifting up choruses of praise to our Lord.

Let's face it: Singing is romantic. When we sing to the Lord, it is an expression of romance. People see that we are in love with Him.

I want to return to the thought I asked you to hold on to. Since God is the One we worship, it is His prerogative to establish the framework and the format for doing so. Styles of worship are appointed by Him. We simply recognize them.

How does this apply to us? Here is how. Over the last three-and-one-half decades, there has been a debate between hymns and contemporary praise music. I believe both were appointed by God, at different times, for different reasons. Contemporary praise music doesn't cancel-out the great hymns of the faith; but neither are the hymns more spiritual or anointed than contemporary praise. Did you know that the singing of hymns was once considered radical in congregational worship?

At the time of the Reformation, in the 16th century, most singing was chanting and could only be performed by monks. The reformers wanted songs that could be sung and understood by everyone, so they introduced metrical versions of the psalms. The psalms were given a rhyme and rhythm and verse structure. Metrical psalms became the main style of worship. Whether they knew it or not, it was a return to Davidic worship!

Hymns are songs based more loosely on Bible texts or theology. Isaac Watts - whose hymns include *Joy to the World* – was a prolific early hymn writer. The Wesley brothers, John and Charles, made hymns the central feature of Methodist worship.

The Church of England, however, strongly opposed the hymns in favor of metrical psalms. The matter came to a head in Sheffield, England in 1819 when Vicar Thomas Cotterill imposed Methodist-style hymns on his congregation. The people rebelled and took him to what was called the Diocesan Consistory Court. The case was heard by the Chancellor of the Diocese of York who concluded that both hymns and metrical psalms were illegal in Anglican liturgy but, because their use was so widespread, he didn't feel able to enforce his decision!

Hymns were in. Then, in the 1970's, the Church experienced another radical musical departure. A whole new style of worship emerged from the Jesus Movement that was happening throughout the United States, but especially from Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa. It's what we now commonly call praise music, or contemporary worship.

What's my point? If you study history, you find that at certain moments, God Himself appoints a whole new style of praise and worship. Then He anoints it to draw worshippers into His presence. He did it with David and the psalms; He did it in the 16th century with a return to metrical psalms and with hymns; He did it in the 20th century when a new style of music accompanied the Jesus Movement. He'll probably do it again, unless Jesus Raptures us first.