

## Nehemiah 12:1-43, “Rejoicing, Thanksgiving & Singing” 11/5/23

**Introduction:** Chapter 12 is the climax of the Book: a rebuilt temple, people, and wall!

- Happiness & Joy: is there a difference?
  - Happiness – superficial, the result of earthly circumstances.
  - Joy – not superficial, but enduring, no matter what the circumstances.
- No distinctions in the Bible:
  - Jer. 31:13, “I will turn their mourning into joy ... and bring happiness out of grief.”
  - NT: Makarios – “Blessed,” yet also meaning ‘happy.’
- No distinctions in the English language:
  - Edwards, “The happiness Christ gives to His people is a participation of His own happiness.”
  - Spurgeon: “Oh, cheerful, happy, joyous people. I wish there were more of you. Let the uppermost joy you have always be Christ himself ... Despite your tribulation, take full delight in God, your exceeding joy this morning and be happy in Him...”
- God is the source of all happiness, even for the unbeliever. YET, there are two big differences between a believer & an unbeliever in the arena of happiness (joy):
  1. An unbeliever ultimately finds his joy in God’s gifts: food, drink, anything in creation. Yet, these gifts will one day be cut off for the unbeliever.
  2. An unbeliever cannot have spiritual joy (better than all other joys!) Ps. 16:11, “In Your presence is fullness of joy.” A believer finds his happiness in God. Since he has secured that happiness, when he enjoys God’s gifts (food, drink, anything in creation), he can have greater pleasure in those gifts than an unbeliever ever can!
- C.S. Lewis: 1<sup>st</sup> things & 2<sup>nd</sup> things. “If you put the 2<sup>nd</sup> things (God’s gifts) first, then you lose, in many ways, the value of those 2<sup>nd</sup> things. But if you put the 1<sup>st</sup> things first, and the 1<sup>st</sup> thing is really God, then everything else falls in place.”

**12:12-26**, Believers are to be thankful people, thanking the Lord for His:

- Word... gives life! (Ps. 119:50).
- Blessings: Adoption, God’s righteousness, fellowship with His body, eternal life, hope...
- Decrees: (Rm. 5:3, ‘rejoice in our sufferings’): Afflictions, disappointments, troubles...

**12:31-37**, A couple of characteristics of biblical worship:

1. Lyrics that are biblically & theologically accurate, Jn. 4:24.
2. Instruments that glorify God, Ps. 150.

**Conclusion:** All people desire happiness/joy.

1. Where are you seeking your happiness/joy? Phil. 3:1 “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me & is safe for you.”
2. George Mueller, German evangelist & director of orphanages in England, 1800’s. “I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great & primary business to which I ought to attend

*every day was to have my soul **happy** in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a **happy state**, and how my inner man may be nourished...I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God & to meditation on it."*