

**Nehemiah Part 20**  
**A Day of Giving and Consecration**  
**Nehemiah 12:44-47**

**Conference highlights**

More aspects of this *day of joy*.

**Nehemiah 12:44-47**

*On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered. 45 And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. 46 For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron.*

**On that day men were appointed... over the...**

• **Storerooms:**

- These were built around the Temple grounds to hold the different items necessary for the daily operation of the Temple and the Temple Service.
- These were side rooms on the temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:5; 1 Chron. 28:11; 2 Chron. 31:11; Neh. 10:37-39; 12:25; 13:4, 12-13).

**Contributions:**

- Items of value to the Temple Service
- Items of support for the Levites and their work.
- Food and wine
- Things needed in the Temple: Flour and other items for the specific rituals that were performed.

**Firstfruits:**

- Firstfruits refers to the first portion of the harvest that is given to God. Most notably the firstfruits are:
  - The first to come in time
  - A pledge or hope of the greater harvest to follow
  - Specially dedicated to God.
- A Firstfruits ceremony is described in detail in Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- The "firstborn," whether human or beast, was also considered of God's special possession and can be considered a type of firstfruit. Exodus 22:29, 34:19

• **The Spiritual Meaning:**

- By giving God the firstfruits,
    - Israel acknowledged that all good things come from God
    - And that everything belongs to God.
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- Giving the firstfruits was also
  - a way of expressing trust in God's provision;
  - just as He provided the firstfruits...
  - so He would provide the rest of the crops that were needed.
- **The Feast of Firstfruits was...**
  - instituted when the nation of Israel was still wandering
  - They had no land or crops.
  - It was observed in faith...
  - that God would lead the people to the land He had promised.
  - God keeps His promises
- **The Prophetic Meaning:**
  - **The nation of Israel was described as...**
    - the "firstfruits of God's harvest" (Jeremiah 2:3).
    - Israel was to be a pledge of a greater harvest in that...
    - She would experience God's redemption and,
    - Demonstrate this redemption to the nations,
    - that they too might come to know the God of Israel.

### **The Meaning for Christians today**

- While there is no New Testament admonition binding Christians to give "firstfruits" we do know...
  - that God loves a cheerful giver.
  - Christians are expected to give of our substance
  - to support the work of the church and missions.
  - We, like the Israelites are called to be generous givers
- **The Spiritual Meaning:**
  - All Christians are especially dedicated to God in the manner of firstfruits.
  - **James 1:18** *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*
  - We need to be mindful, just as God wanted Israel to be mindful,
    - that who we are and all we have belong to God.
- **The Prophetic Meaning:**
  - In addition to the fact that God has promised that we, too, will be raised from the dead,
    - in Romans 8:23 Paul says that as redeemed people we possess the "firstfruits of the Spirit."
    - Paul is saying that the measure of the Holy Spirit that we now have is but a foretaste of the greater measure there will be in the age to come,
    - And that the gift of the Spirit now is just a small portion of the many other blessings we will have in due course.

### **Tithe (Much is made today in churches of the tithe)**

- **Deuteronomy 14:22-27** *"You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God*

*and rejoice, you and your household. And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.*

- **You shall tithe**
  - **All the increase of your grain**
    - This was the grain left over after the seed-grain was taken out.
    - This meant that the tithe was assessed on the *income*, not on the total *assets*.
- **You shall eat before the LORD**
  - When the tithe was delivered to the tabernacle (and later, to the temple),
  - a portion of the tithe was enjoyed in a ceremonial meal “with” the LORD.
  - The remainder was given to the priest.
- **That you may learn to fear the LORD your God always:**
  - This was the purpose of tithing;
    - to build an honor and reverence for God.
    - *The purpose of tithing was to teach the Jews to always put God first in their lives.*
    - *Another way to say this would be for us to always have Jesus at the center of our being.*
      - *So that He is expressed in everything we do.*
        - *Trip to SoCal: Encouragement.*
- **“Long-distance” tithing.**
  - **But if the journey is too long for you**
    - Since the tithe was to be brought to one place for the whole nation,
    - some would be farther than others.
    - And, if someone was far away, they would find it difficult to transport the grain and livestock the tithe required.
- **You shall exchange it for money**
  - If distance prevented the easy transport of the animals,
  - they could exchange their tithe for money,
  - and then use the money to tithe with when they came to the Temple.
- **You shall rejoice, you and your household**
  - Laws like this show us that God is a common-sense God.
  - He does not place unreasonable demands on His people.
  - He made a way for them to more conveniently tithe.

#### **Some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings:**

- This was a **day of giving.**
  - People brought their **offerings, firstfruits, tithes** to the storehouse of the Levites,
  - and they did it with joy because they enjoyed supporting the priests and Levites ministering on their behalf.
- **Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification**
  - This was a **day of purity.**
    - It was an ongoing concern,
    - not a one-time ceremony... just like our continuing sanctification.
- **They also consecrated holy things for the Levites:**
  - It was a **day of consecration.**

- Holy things were set apart for the Levites, separating them unto God for the work of the ministry.
- **Nehemiah took advantage of this celebration to provide for ongoing worship.**
  - Music had been an important part of David's preparations for the temple, under the leadership of the musician **Asaph** (1 Chron. 15:19; 16:4-5, 37).
  - Besides being an effective administrator Nehemiah was also a man of worship.
  - He was concerned with praise by music and praise by gifts.

The people had made an agreement to provide for the priests and Levites in Neh. 10:37-39

- Nehemiah was making sure that the worship in the Temple would be provided for.
  - He was encouraging faithful giving to the worship of God
- Pray for and bless those that serve us
  - In worship
  - In hospitality
  - In cheerful service
  - Leaders and workers in the church.
- **When we gather together,**
  - when we sing together
  - and pray together
  - and take communion together,
  - when we give and serve together... **we are proclaiming Christ until His return.**

We remember... in unity. Together. One body with differing gifts and areas of strength and service.

- We remember that we are loved.
  - That God is not mad at us.
  - That He is not playing some cruel game with us or using us like pawns in a chess match.
  - That He loves us so very much.
  - That our lives are not about our sin, but about the finished work of Christ.
  - That everything God has ever done has been to demonstrate His unending love for us.
  - That He is preparing a place for us in His kingdom for eternity.

Jesus has made this and every day... a day of Joy!