

Ministers in God's Temple

Nehemiah 12:1-26

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Mosaical priesthood was divided into twenty-four courses (1 Chron. 24:1-19).
 - a. Organized by David (v. 3) by lot (v. 5)
 - b. The purpose was "to come into the house of the Lord according to the procedure established for them" (v. 19).
 - c. Zechariah "was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense" (Luke 1:8, 9).
2. "These were the chiefs of the priests..." (Neh. 12:7).
 - a. Of the priests, only four courses returned to Judah (Neh. 7:39-42; cf. Ezra 2:36-39).
 - b. The four courses of priests that returned to Judah were divided, evidently, by Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest (Neh. 2:26; Ezra 7:1, 5) into twenty named courses (Neh. 12:12-21).
3. Once important lists are relics of a system now obsolete (cf. Heb. 8:13).
4. However, they suggest truths that abide.

DISCUSSION:

- I. There are varieties of ministry in the house of God.**
 - A. Priests (vv. 12-21), Levites (vv. 22-26), singers (vv. 28, 29), leaders (v. 31), gatekeepers (vv. 45, 47), and guards of treasure-houses (v. 44)
 - B. The church is today's "house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - C. In the Lord's service, there are varieties of gifts and responsibilities (cf. Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11).
- II. The time of our service is brief.**
 - A. "These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel..." (v. 1).
 - B. "And in the days of Joiakim were priests..." (v. 12).
 - C. Death brings an end to service (cf. Heb. 9:27).
 - D. Work while it is day (cf. John 9:4).
- III. Fame is uncertain and fleeting.**
 - A. Many of the most excellent live and die unnoticed, and their names are found in no record.
 - B. Many of the recorded names are not the most worthy.
 - C. Even recorded names soon become little more than names.
 - D. Therefore, the honor that comes from men cannot be the greatest reward of service (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4).