

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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VOLUME 34

December 2012

NUMBER 12

THE SOUND OF JOY

***...And the singers sang, with Jezrahiah their leader, and on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy, even the women and children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.
(Nehemiah 12:42-43)***

When worship is done rightly, it produces a spirit of joy. Because God is there. And joy is from God. The account says that the people sang and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. We cannot pretend that we are joyful. We cannot manufacture it. We can only respond to what God does because of our desire to see Him exalted. We are told that the singers sang. We may think that is not a significant thing. But there are many singers who don't sing. They just go through the motions, mindlessly mouthing the words, trying to stay in tune. When a singer really sings, it makes a difference in worship. The joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar. That's what happens when singers really sing. It is attractive and the message goes far from the place where the song is sung. The joy is "heard" beyond the boundaries. Oh, how we can mute the sound of joy...the many songs that are stifled...muffled...muddled. But how the people of God can make a difference when they remember they have reason to rejoice. Joy remains an effective message in the heart long after the tune has faded away from the ears.

For Nehemiah and his people, the wall they rebuilt was secondary in priorities. Worship was primary. The need for the wall symbolized their helpless vulnerability apart from the protection and providence of God. The strength of God and His plan of community were lived out in their worship experience. All our joy flows from a right worship relationship with God. Significant in a previous verse of this passage is a reference to the musical instruments of David, the man of God. Had these things survived the progression of time even through the exile? Who had them? Where were they? Had they been silent till now? It would be truly significant if these things had been preserved. But more significant is the preservation of the presence of joy in the people of God. This is a timeless aspect to true worship. Sometimes we think we can't worship if we don't use the same musical instruments that our forefathers used. The things that make the music are not as critical as the sound of the music. Does it sound like joy? The joy of the Lord, found in the worship of God, is a tune that never goes out of tune...and always living beyond its time.

Christmas Blessings to you,

Pastor Sam