

Nehemiah 11-12
Psalm 126
Hebrews 12:18-29

“The Joy of Jerusalem”

April 7, 2019

Why do I inflict all these names on you?!

Because genealogies tell stories.

My son’s name is William,

my brother’s name is William,

my father’s name is William,

my grandfather’s name is William,

my great-grandfather’s name is William,

my great-great-granduncle’s name is William...

there has been a William Wallace in every generation of my family for 500 years.

But if you’re not Scottish – that doesn’t mean that much to you!

But in Nehemiah 11-12, these names *mean something to you!*

Because in your baptism, you have grafted into Israel –
you have become heirs of Abraham by faith.

This story *becomes your story.*

“What is *the joy of Jerusalem*, when God *made them rejoice with great joy?*

It is, first, that the walls of Jerusalem have been restored.

But more importantly, it is that the precious threads

between the present people and the present city

with the preexilic people and the preexilic city remain intact:

the stones of broken Jerusalem, left for dead,

are restored once again to their proper place.” (Levering 199)

Think about Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel chapter 37.

Here in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem,

“Ezekiel’s prophecy thus comes true,

if not yet in its deepest meanings of bodily resurrection.

“The Lord ‘brought me [Ezekiel] out by the Spirit of the LORD,

and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones (Ezek. 37:1).

God asks Ezekiel: ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’

And I answered, ‘O Lord GOD, thou knowest.’

Again he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them,

O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:

Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live” (37:3-5)

In Ezekiel’s vision, he prophesies to the bones and they come alive.

God then explains the vision to him:

‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.
Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost;
we are clean cut off’” (37:11).
God commands Ezekiel to prophesy the restoration of the people of Israel.
Speaking through Ezekiel, God tells Israel:
‘I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people,
and I will bring you home into the land of Israel...
and I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live,
and I will place you in your own land;
then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it.’”
(37:12, 14).” (Levering, 199)

The restoration from Babylon is a picture – a foretaste – of the resurrection from the dead.

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 126 –
a song that expresses this “already/not yet” dynamic.
Verse 1 speaks of the joy of the restoration of the fortunes of Zion –
when God brought back the captives!
And yet verse 4 asks God to “restore our fortunes” –
bring back our captives –
because even though we *already* have received the gift of the Holy Spirit –
we have *not yet* been raised bodily from the dead.

(I love how Ezra-Nehemiah sets us up for Easter!)

Sing Psalm 126 (PHSS)
Read Hebrews 12:18-29

Hebrews 12 contrasts the picture of Israel coming to Moses at Mt. Sinai
with us coming to Jesus at Mt. Zion – the heavenly Jerusalem!

And this is where we are!
We are gathered on the heavenly Feast Day – the “festal gathering” of the heavenly city!
And *you* are called to *hear* the better word.
Yes, there is a warning!
How will you escape if you reject the word of him who warns from heaven?

But there is also a promise – a blessing –
because we who receive this word are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken!

And *that kingdom* is what Nehemiah is talking about in Nehemiah 11-12.
Nehemiah has finished building the wall.
But “building a wall” – by itself – is not going to make Jerusalem great again!

A Holy City needs a Holy People.

1. Organizing the Holy People (11:1-36)

a. Restoring a Holy People to a Holy City (v1-24)

11 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten^[a] remained in the other towns. ² And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

Verse 1 tells us that the *leaders* of the people lived in Jerusalem –
but now they need to repopulate the rest of the city.

The first thing to see is that the leaders are taking the lead!

Yes, there would be long-term benefits to living in Jerusalem!

But short-term?

You are starting *all over*.

Just think about what is going on:

Let's start a city from scratch!

Who wants to go and create this brand-new community?!

You are looking around – wondering,

“who all is going to be involved in this project!”

What if we don't get along?

Um, well, more like, “What happens *when* we don't get along?!”

But the leaders took the lead – they set the example –

and now the rest of the people have to decide who will join them.

And they do by casting lots.

Casting lots leaves the final decision in the hand of God (Fensham, 243)

But also notice the end of verse 2 –

they blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

Does that mean that some people lived there *willingly*,

while others were forced to live there by “casting lots”?

Almost assuredly not.

Just imagine the picture:

you have fifty families gathered in a village to cast lots.

The lot falls to five men.

Everyone is looking at you.

What will you do?

Will you accept the decision of the community?

Will you accept the providence of God in how the lot was cast?

One man says, “No, I can’t leave my land.
My father died last year – and if I move to Jerusalem
I will lose everything that he worked so hard to build.”

You think about your own father and all his hard work.
You know that your cousin will take over the family land –
but he’s kind of an idiot.
The lot falls to you.

Will you go to Jerusalem?

I suspect that verse 2 is saying that when the lot fell to you –
you still had to accept it!

Yes, community pressure would be intense to accept it!

The casting of lots was used regularly in the OT (and also in the NT)
to make these sorts of decisions.

After Judas – the betrayer of Jesus – died,
the apostles found his replacement by casting lots.

There were two men – Matthias and Justus – who were both worthy men –
both had been among Jesus’ disciples from the beginning;
both were faithful and godly men.

Either one was qualified to be an apostle.
So which one should it be?

Flip a coin!
Cast lots!

And trust God for the outcome.

Now let me warn you:

Don’t do this as a *replacement* for exercising godly wisdom!
Should I marry Jim or Joe? (Just flip a coin!!)

Casting lots is generally not used in the bible for *personal* decisions.

It is for *communal* decisions,
when the community wants to avoid the dangers of “politicking”!

Nehemiah doesn’t want to play favorites.

(Just like centuries later, the 11 apostles want to leave the decision to God).

The community here is convinced that they need to repopulate Jerusalem.

But who should go?

When the lot falls to you – will you willingly do what God calls you to do?

Verse 3 provides an overview of the residents of Jerusalem:

³ *These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah everyone lived on his property in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants.*

In verses 4-9 we hear about the leaders – the chiefs who lived in Jerusalem (1,394).

⁴ *And in Jerusalem lived certain of the sons of Judah and of the sons of Benjamin. Of the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez;* ⁵ *and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, son of the Shilonite.* ⁶ *All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 valiant men.*

⁷ *And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah,* ⁸ *and his brothers, men of valor, 928.*^[b] ⁹ *Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer; and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second over the city.*

¹⁰ *Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin,* ¹¹ *Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, ruler of the house of God,* ¹² *and their brothers who did the work of the house, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah,* ¹³ *and his brothers, heads of fathers' houses, 242; and Amashsai, the son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer,* ¹⁴ *and their brothers, mighty men of valor, 128; their overseer was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim.*

¹⁵ *And of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni;* ¹⁶ *and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who were over the outside work of the house of God;* ¹⁷ *and Mattaniah the son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who was the leader of the praise,*^[c] *who gave thanks, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brothers; and Abda the son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun.* ¹⁸ *All the Levites in the holy city were 284.*

¹⁹ *The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brothers, who kept watch at the gates, were 172.*

²⁰ *And the rest of Israel, and of the priests and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, every one in his inheritance.* ²¹ *But the temple servants lived on Ophel; and Ziha and Gishpa were over the temple servants.*

²² *The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the work of the house of God.*

Verses 10-24 lay out the situation of the priests and Levites.

There are nearly 1200 priests living in Jerusalem – and 284 Levites.

As we've seen, it was harder to get the Levites to get excited about returning to Jerusalem –

because their jobs were not as glamorous as the priests.

Jozabad (v16) was in charge of the outside work.
Mattaniah – the descendent of Asaph (v17) was the leader of the praise.
Both were apparently under the oversight of Uzzi – also a descendent of Asaph (v22).

The gatekeepers were those who guarded the gates of the temple (not the city gates).
Their task was to make sure that nothing unclean entered the temple.

Verse 23 tells us

²³ *For there was a command from the king concerning them, and a fixed provision for the singers, as every day required.*

This probably refers to the King of Persia.

Verse 24 goes on to say that:

²⁴ *And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's side^[d] in all matters concerning the people.*

While Nehemiah is serving as governor in Jerusalem,
Pethahiah seems to be the one back in Persia as the advocate for the Jews.

What you see in these opening verses of chapter 11
is the restoration of the holy people to the holy city.
They believe God's promises – and they act accordingly.

Now, in our day, God has made no promise that our particular cities will be restored.
South Bend, Elkhart, Niles, Mishawaka, Granger, Bremen, Osceola, Three Rivers –
and so on.

Right now, Pastor Joel is particularly focused on Elkhart,
and I'm particularly focused on South Bend,
but that's just because of the nature of the relationships
that we have formed over the years.

And we do this on the basis of God's *general promise*
that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church.

And while there is a focus in Ezra-Nehemiah on *Jerusalem* –
it's worth pointing out that *most of the people* of Judah
didn't live in Jerusalem!

Elkhart may be the focal point of Elkhart County –
but every community in Elkhart County needs the gospel.
South Bend may be the center of the "Michiana" region –
but every community in Michiana needs the gospel.

And all the villages matter! (look at verses 25-36)

b. Those Who Lived in the Villages (v25-36)

²⁵ And as for the villages, with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its villages, and in Dibon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, ²⁶ and in Jeshua and in Moladah and Beth-pelet, ²⁷ in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its villages, ²⁸ in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, ²⁹ in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, ³⁰ Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So they encamped from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. ³¹ The people of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages, ³² Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, ³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, ³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, ³⁵ Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. ³⁶ And certain divisions of the Levites in Judah were assigned to Benjamin.

The village list is important.

If you get out a map and try to figure out what is going on – you may get confused! Some of the villages are in the territory of Judah and Benjamin – and some are not. But what does it say:

“some of the people of Judah lived in...” these places.

They didn’t just live in the Persian province of Judah.

They were kind of scattered around the region.

One commentator rightly suggests that it “gives us the names of areas with a fairly large Jewish population.” (Fensham, 249)

There are important towns in this region whose names are omitted from the list.

Why?

Probably because there were not many Jews who lived there.

This is a reminder that the restoration in Ezra-Nehemiah is a *partial* restoration.

The holy people is being restored to the holy city –
God is raising the dry bones of Israel!

“But now we know in part and we prophesy in part...

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13)

2. The Priests and Levites of the Restoration (12:1-26)

12 These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, ³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, ⁴ Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, ⁵ Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, ⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

⁸ And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. ⁹ And Bakbukiah and Unni and their

brothers stood opposite them in the service. ¹⁰ And Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, ¹¹ Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

¹² And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' houses: of Seraiah, Meraiiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; ¹³ of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; ¹⁴ of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; ¹⁵ of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; ¹⁶ of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; ¹⁷ of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; ¹⁸ of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; ¹⁹ of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; ²⁰ of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; ²¹ of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

²² In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the Levites were recorded as heads of fathers' houses; so too were the priests in the reign of Darius the Persian. ²³ As for the sons of Levi, their heads of fathers' houses were written in the Book of the Chronicles until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. ²⁴ And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch. ²⁵ Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storehouses of the gates. ²⁶ These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra, the priest and scribe.

The list of priest and Levites is challenging!

If you go through the list carefully,

you will find the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (v1-7), also those who were “in the days of Joiakim” (v12-21) – also v26, “in the days of Eliashib” (v22) and in the reign of Darius the Persian (v22), the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib (v23) and in the days of Nehemiah (v26).

So these names come from all over a span of a couple hundred years

(during the high priesthoods of Jeshua, Joiakim, Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua).

Of course, the high priest in Nehemiah’s day was Eliashib!

So this tells us that the book of Nehemiah was only put in its final form no earlier than the days of Jaddua (ca. 330 B.C. – around the time of Alexander the Great).

But if chapter 11 connected the restored city back to Solomon and the past, chapter 12 is now connecting them to Zerubbabel and the future.

3. The Dedication of the Wall (12:27-43)

²⁷ And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. ²⁸ And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; ²⁹ also from Beth-

gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. ³⁰ *And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.*

Only now does Nehemiah dedicate the wall.

Why did he wait so long?

Because the purpose of the wall was to protect the holy city.

And the holy city is incomplete without a holy people.

They had to celebrate the feast of booths –

the feast celebrating God’s protection in the wilderness.

They had been in exile in Babylon for 70 years –

and even after returning to the land,

they continued wandering in the wilderness for 100 years.

After all, if you are “in the land” – but you do not know what God requires of you?! – are you *really* home?

Ezra had come to Jerusalem to study, to do, and to teach the Law of God.

Nehemiah has come to rebuild the wall.

In a very real way the two projects are really *one project*.

A stone wall cannot *really* protect Jerusalem.

Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain!

If you are trying to build your life on your career – your family – your hobbies – you are building with straw and stubble!

But if you build your life on the *word of God* –

and yes, the teaching of the scriptures is essential to that –

but at the *heart* of the Scriptures is the *Word* who became flesh!

The Word incarnate is what makes the Word written (and the Word preached) all come together!

There is no other foundation – no other solid rock – than Christ.

Zerubbabel had rebuilt the temple.

But it took another 60 years before Ezra came to study, to do, and to teach the Law.

And now, after 15 years of Ezra’s studying, doing, and teaching

Nehemiah has finished the wall.

There is now a solid foundation for the people of God in the land.

There is now a fortress – a refuge for God’s chosen ones.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path.

And that's worth singing about!!!

And so only *after* they fill the renewed city
do they dedicate its walls!

Nehemiah has two choirs march around the city – marching along the top of the city wall!

³¹ Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. ³² And after them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah, ³³ and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, ³⁵ and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph; ³⁶ and his relatives, 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. ³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they went up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

Notice that David is named *three times* in verses 36-37.

They have the musical instruments of David the man of God.

They go up the stairs of the city of David, above the house of David!

Of course, the exact instruments of David would have been over 500 years old.

They are not using the exact instruments!

They are using the *same kind of instruments* as David!

Likewise, the “stairs of the city of David” and the “house of David”

had both been destroyed by the Babylonians.

But they have been rebuilt – or, at least, restored in some measure.

And so Ezra the scribe leads the musicians on the southward trek around the wall,
and back up the east wall towards the temple.

³⁸ The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah,^[a] and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard.

⁴⁰ So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; ⁴¹ and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; ⁴² and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. ⁴³ And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Meanwhile, Nehemiah followed the choir that went north –
until both choirs had gathered at the House of God – the temple.

And there “both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God” –
“And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced,
for God had made them rejoice with great joy;
the women and children also rejoiced...”

In the Law of Moses, the requirement was that all the *males* should appear before God.
But that was not a prohibition against women!
Rather, in a day when travel was difficult,
it was a mercy for women who had recently delivered children
that they were not *required* to come to the temple 3x a year!
But God has always welcomed both men and women – *and children* –
into his house.

And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away!
Why are they so glad?
Because God has raised the dead!
God has restored Israel from exile.
He has breathed life into the dry bones of his people!
He has brought us back from the dead
and he has brought life and joy to Jerusalem!

It would be easy to point out all the flaws – all the problems!
And the very next chapter will do that!
But chapter 12 reminds us that in the midst of life’s trials and tribulations,
we find *joy*.
Not just the fleeting pleasures of food and drink!
But *joy*!

As the people of God worship their God –
as the singers sing – as the priests offer sacrifices –
as each part of the body does its part –
all the people rejoice with great joy!

As they march along the wall and through the city,
they see the mighty works of God in their day!
A renewed city – a restored city –
the place where God dwells with his people!

In other words – *by faith* they see Jesus!
After all, *Jesus* is the temple – he is the place where God dwells with his people.

And it all comes together in the last four verses of chapter 12.

4. The Law, the Temple, and the People: The Holy City Restored (12:44-47)

⁴⁴ 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^[b] 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.

Verse 44 highlights the Mosaic roots of the community –
they appoint men over the storerooms
to gather the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, “as required by the law.”
At the root of the Holy City is the Law of Moses.

Verses 45-46 turn to the Davidic foundation of the temple.
All the priests and Levites and singers and gatekeepers
do according to what was commanded by “David and Solomon,”
or “David and Asaph.”
Particularly the music of OT worship was rooted in David and Asaph.

Verse 47 then focuses on the restoration of the community –
“in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah.”

For once – in all of Israel’s history –
there has been a century of *increased* faithfulness!

In the days of David and Solomon Israel had done well –
but by the end of Solomon’s reign, things were already falling apart!
But now from the time of Zerubbabel to the time of Nehemiah
we have seen a “day of small beginnings”
grow into a day of great joy – a day of increased faithfulness –
a community that is beginning to walk in the way of the LORD!

But when these three things come together –
the Law, the Temple, and the People –
good things will happen!

The gospel of Luke highlights this point about the Law, the Temple, and the People.
Luke’s gospel begins with Zechariah the priest, ministering in the temple.
And he and his wife, Elizabeth, are said to be
“walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.”

And while he is burning incense in the temple – according to the Law –
“the whole multitude of the people were praying outside.” (Luke 1)

Luke 2 tells us that Jesus’ parents brought him to the temple for his purification
“according to the Law of Moses” –
and there they met Simeon and Anna – faithful witnesses
who “began to give thanks to God and to speak of him
to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Luke 2 ends with Jesus in the Temple discussing the Law –
“and all who heard him were amazed.”

The Law, the Temple, and the People is also where Luke’s gospel ends in Luke 24:
as Jesus tells his disciples that all the Law and the Prophets speaks concerning himself.
Then Jesus explained that they were to be his witnesses
“that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name
to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;”
and so after his ascension, they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
and were continually in the temple blessing God.”

Because a Holy City needs a Holy People.

It all starts with the resurrection of Jesus!
In the resurrection of Jesus, God has raised his Israel into joy from sadness!
In the resurrection of Jesus, there is now a Holy man –
one who bears *our* flesh and blood, who sits at the right hand of God!
The man from heaven now sits in the heavenly city!

And that man from heaven – our Lord Jesus Christ –
has promised eternal life to all who repent and believe on his name!