

Transcription of 17ID1973

Nehemiah 12

"Joy Upon the Wall"

November 26, 2017

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Nehemiah 12. We are going to finish this book before the holidays, or at least the next holidays. Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are both on Sunday this year, so we'll be here a lot. I hope you'll join us.

The book of Nehemiah is interesting. It breaks itself up into several categories. The first couple of chapters of the book cover about six months of time. Chapters 3-6 cover six weeks. And then starting in chapter 6 (in the middle) towards chapter 7 (to the end), many, many years - twelve, fifteen, twenty years or longer.

The first six chapters are all about getting the wall up, finished, God's leadership, calling a man, hearing His voice, leading others. Fifty-two days a wall goes up that's been down for the better part of 160 years. But then the greater work began - the building up, again, of the people in the LORD. And as we mentioned, I think last week, there is no larger concentration of verses and chapters in the Bible about one revival than there is here. You are really given it from every angle - the reinstruction of the people.

So, you get to chapters 7 and 8 - especially chapter 8 - there are these six steps that the people took individually and nationally to do better with the LORD because they hadn't done so well. That's one of the reasons they'd been in captivity; the other reason - the thing had just kind of lie there after folks had come home almost 100 years earlier, some of them. In chapter 9, they pray a prayer, together, of repentance over what has happened, knowing and having heard from the Scriptures how much they'd fallen short. They write down a covenant with God, "We're going to do these things His way. That's going to help us. We're going to define what God wants from us, and we're going to follow after it." They sign it in chapter 10. They make a commitment to keep the Sabbath days, to put their lives in line with the LORD's will for them, to keep the Jubilee releases that the Law demanded of them; all of that was financial and difficult in a time when they had little, and even that of supporting the sacrifices at the Temple. Last week, in chapter 11, we looked at how the sacrifices continued in that the city needed to be inhabited, but it was tough going. You really had to kind of be a pilgrim and live without. And so we studied how that there was a place for everyone, and everyone found their place; and how God used each of them together.

Well this morning (and chapter 13 is a different animal - chapter 13 comes years later, so we're going to look at that in the next two weeks), in Nehemiah's diary, there is this detail of the dedication of the wall. So it takes us back, if you will, to chapter 6, but it is something that he wanted to write down, that he remembered, and that he wanted to communicate to us how excited the people were that God was at work. And it is a chapter that really is all about joy on the wall.

If joy were a disease, I think it would be extremely contagious. Because it seems to me if you can find people that are truly joyful, they're probably the folks that you want to be your friends. Not the long-in-the-face, constantly-complaining, "Oh, something's always wrong with the world." But to find people that are truly joyful in the Lord - those are hard people to find. They're hard to find in the church! They're a rare find. It is usually the grumbling, downcast masses, and I'm still talking about the church. Now, the world has lots of reasons to be down in the mouth. I mean, if you've ever turned on your 24-hour TV channel, things are bleak. There's a political circus, there's international tension, there're always things going on. The crime reports are not good. And if you had any joy at all, they could steal it from you in moments.

But that's not the way the Lord has for you to live in this life. In fact, throughout the Scriptures you find that God's desire for your life and mine is to be full of joy. Fullness of joy. And you find it here on the wall and in the hearts of the people. It is a joy that lightens their burdens because things are tough, still. Oh, they've got a wall, but they've got poverty and oppression and difficulty and years of having done the wrong thing. And yet for the time being, as things began, you find that the nation itself was able to look at their circumstances through God's eyes. And really, biblical joy is like that; it is looking at life through God's eyes, seeing things from God's point of view. Joy isn't burying your head in the sand, forcing a smile on your face and just saying to yourself, "It's all going to be all right." It is more than the fake joy. It is a joy that comes because you realize the truth, and when the truth grips your heart, joy will fill it as well. It's truth realized. I believe what God has said. I understand what He is saying to me.

So chapter 12 is all about a diary of - it's almost like he sat down and he wrote the notes, and, "This is what happened on that day. What a day it was, the dedication of the wall." And it may have come a little bit later, but it was certainly probably not chronologically stuck here in chapter 12.

So verse 1 through verse 26 (you're getting used to not reading names - we're not going to read those either) is a recap of all of the priests and Levites and their lineage who came up from Babylon early on (91 years earlier) with Zerubbabel and Jeshua. They are the forefathers of the folks that are there in that day. And, in fact, this is like first, second, and now third generations of folks who have seen God's blessing and have enjoyed God's goodness.

In fact, verse 26 says, "These lived in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe." So three generations of folks and their descendants listed just to say there was a history at least, here, of godly people living in this place even though the revival needed to take place now.

Following that list, beginning in verse 27, Nehemiah then, led by the Spirit, focuses on the dedication of this completed wall and the joy that the people found in the fact that it was done. And they found plenty of joy in it. It is, I think, spiritually kind of relatable to the fact that God, when He saves you, starts to build the walls of your life. You are exposed to the enemy and kind of overrun by sin, and then the Lord moves in, and He saves you, and He begins to build your life in Him. And it's really the same picture. It is that picture of you being built in the Lord as your fellowship with Him begins to grow. It is extremely helpful - if you haven't done it this week, you should do it more often than just on Thanksgiving - to once in a while stop and take inventory of all that God has given you. You are a blessed people, are you not? We have been given more than we deserve. And so often it is this overwhelming sense of want that clouds out what God has done and yet what He is going to do. So, there's something about taking inventory and taking stock of things that will cause worship and thanksgiving. And you find it here in the lives of the people.

We read, in verse 27, "Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem." So, in preparation for the dedication, they sent out invitations to everyone that had a skill in playing an instrument and of singing with their voices. They wanted a lot of music. Joy comes

with music. For this special occasion, they had to go find them out. It seems that, around the surrounding communities, they had been settled by the Levites, and they lived together - these worship leaders and singers and priests. And everyone was invited. "Bring your instrument." This was going to be an unforgettable day. It was going to be a big jam session, everybody's eyes on the LORD. And so the vocalists came from far and wide to participate.

And we read, in verse 30, that, "Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall." Before the festivities could begin, they needed to purify, ceremonially so, all that God had given them to dedicate, if you will, and devote these things to the LORD. That's really what this whole dedication thing is all about. It isn't just going through the motions. It's just that holiness has to precede joy. It's impossible to sing to the Lord if your heart's not right with God. And so they show up, and the first thing they do is they go and put the LORD in their national life, and they have this ceremonial cleansing that symbolizes the reality. You know, sometimes you have religious things that just are religious; and there're plenty of churches that do religious things all of the time. But this isn't religious. This a reflection of the hearts of the people. God had made them clean, God had made them holy, God had built a wall, God had shown them favor, God had been with them, He had protected them. And so, with joy overflowing, they dedicate everything that they see, themselves included, to the service of God. They hadn't seen this kind of national rejoicing in hundreds of years, in hundreds of years. And even the wall was ceremonially purified - dedicated to God, "God, You put this up in record time! A little over seven weeks, and it's standing, it's standing up!" How thankful they were for God's work.

We read in verse 31 (Nehemiah said), "So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. After them went Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah," and then a bunch more names. But verse 36 (at the end), "And Ezra the scribe went before them." So, up on the wall Nehemiah now positions two very large choirs. It seems that there were probably thousands of singers that would stand on the wall to sing down to the rest of the people. To the right, Ezra led them out. He led them, verse 37, "By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water Gate eastward. The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall,"

and then he, again, lists where they went. "Half of the people went past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall, and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison. So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me." And then again some other names. So, the second choir consisted of the other half of the singers sent in the other direction. And Nehemiah kind of led them out or followed them up, if you will.

But just get a mental picture of this. Imagine worship in stereo without microphones, without monitors, led by Ezra and by Nehemiah. Both, I should tell you, are not worship leaders. In fact, there's no place in either of their lives (in the Bible) that says, "And they sang or led in song." They knew who the worship leaders were, but they gave direction to the people. And if you read where they went, you get a bunch of names of gates and direction. It's been very helpful in archeology to know what the gates were called in the days of Nehemiah. There are still some gates in Jerusalem that have the same name as you find here. But picture a thousand singers on both sides, with musicians kind of scattered among them. The wall was about 10'-12' thick. So there was plenty of room to stand up there. In fact, if you've ever gone to Israel (or you'd like to go with us, we're going the year after next, in March 2019), you can, on your free day in Jerusalem, actually take a tour around the Old City of Jerusalem by walking on the wall. Now you go up and down into people's back yards, but they don't mind. It's open. I wouldn't recommend you doing it in the evening, but in the day it's fine. And can you imagine instruments just kind of flashing in the sun and lots of noise and excitement? I suspect if we were to take you outside to stand around the property today, and we began to yell at the top of our lungs, people would think we're nuts, that we were fanatics. But these guys are fanatics! And you might as well be a fanatic. Why not? Right? What the LORD has done. So there's a great amount of outward enthusiasm and celebration. This isn't hype. Because you can do this with hype. This isn't crowd hysteria generated by a few good manipulators. This is a sincere response to the work of God and the goodness of God in the hearts of a grateful people. This wasn't some solemn, tight-lipped celebration, if you will, occasion. The atmosphere was more like a parade, not a funeral - singing psalms, the symphony playing. And all of them up on the wall, by the grace of God, singing only to one Person and only for one reason. This was an amazing day.

And notice, in verse 40, that Nehemiah calls the city the "house of God." This wasn't the Temple, this was the city itself. This was the place where God had chosen to put His name. This is you and me, the temple of God; He has come to dwell with us. It's a wonderful picture of the church today, of God's dwelling place, that He continues to build. And when you get to verse 40, you want to say, "Wait a minute. Shouldn't the house of God rejoice? Shouldn't God's people rejoice?" And I have found - and maybe you, as well - that Western-culture Christians have the least amount of thankfulness because they have so much, they just kind of take it for granted. The places we've gone in the world (with our missionaries) over the years, you will find, without question, tremendous joy in people's lives who have far less because they value the spiritual things that they have far more than the material things that kind of crowd them out. And maybe that's a good reminder for us when we see the craziness at the store - people beatin' each other up for a TV. And then you look for the joy of the Lord in God's people.

But this was real joy from the heart in the lives of these people who had, for years, lived without God's blessing. Not that He didn't want to bless, but they'd separated themselves from Him. And here they gathered together, and they stand upon the walls, and they make all kinds of noise as they gathered together. In fact, we read in verse 40, the two choirs standing in the house of God, "I and the half of the rulers with me." And then you get down to the end of verse 42, it says, "The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off." Verse 43 - five times the word "joy" in one verse. They sang back and forth. The rest of the population joined in below. They sang at the top of their voices. There was a worship leader to lead them. They yelled back and forth Jehovah cheers. I don't know. They sang in their parts and their harmonies. The guys sang, the girls sang, everyone sang. There was great joy. You could hear it (verse 43) "afar off." And unlike the times of teaching (when we read in chapter 8), here, all of the children come, and the families come, and they participate. It is just a day of tremendous joy, but it is a joy that is rooted in the things of God.

I don't know if you've ever showed up late to a football game, and you're outside in the parking lot when the band begins to play, or there's some big play, and the crowds begin to cheer, and it just gets you to move because you figure you've missed something. And I think that's the way you might have felt on this day. I wonder what it might have sounded like a mile or two away, with Jerusalem sitting

on the hill. And you can hear for miles anyway. And all you could hear was worship being sung. That's the kind of worship God is looking for from us. And in their offerings (in verse 43) and in their worship, moms and dads and kids were expressing the joy of everything that God had done. A genuine revival always works itself out in joy.

I read a story a couple of years ago that I thought was very interesting. In fact, I saw the video of a pastor, and they had a camera up front because they wanted to take shots of the Bible, of the pastor, for their television thing that they were doing. And inadvertently during worship the crowd had been panned, and the pastor watched the congregation during worship. And he said it never broke his heart more than watching how his people worshipped. He said there were people on their iPhones, there were folks - a guy clipping his fingernails, there was a guy texting on his phone, there was another guy sleeping, two people laughing. It just killed him. So he came back to church the next Sunday, and he played it (Pastor Jack frowns) for everyone. I know. (Laughing) That was mean. But how would you have looked this morning during worship? We have a camera. I want to show you. (Laughing) No, we don't either. We probably should have. That would have been cool right there.

Because here's a revival that's a far cry from this. This is like you don't have to tell people to, "Sing a little louder." You've got to tell them to, "Quiet down a little bit. We're gonna shake up the people in Bethlehem three miles away."

We read, in verse 44, "And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered. Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron." The last bit of verses just to say, at least at the time, with great joy they were able to finance the worship leaders, the gatekeepers, and the people valued those who served

them in spiritual things - joy, as a result, in singing and serving and in giving. And, as a result, God continued to work.

We will read in chapter 13 that when Nehemiah comes back after a dozen years of being gone, all of these folks on the employee list at the time are gone, and the Temple is closed, and nothing is going on. Forget about singin' on the wall. There was no singing anywhere. The whole place had been shut down.

But, for now, one thing for sure - there is great joy in the city. And I want you to notice that spiritual doesn't mean somber. God wants you joyful. I had a guy write to us, maybe eight years ago, and he said, "Pastor, I love your teaching, but you're too jovial in the pulpit, so I can't come back." So I wrote the guy a joke and then (Laughing).....no, I did. No, I wrote him these verses. "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). God would have you to be joyful. People write to me sometimes and go, "Oh, the music's too loud." Or, "the people are clapping." Or, "the guy behind me is really singin' loud." And I'm thinkin', "Isn't that all stuff you want?" You really think this sounded good if you isolated anybody on the wall? These guys weren't singers! Oh, there were singers, but let's face it - that's why they're on stage, and you're not. Here's your microphone. (Pastor Jack makes off-key sounds). You'll sound like the first two weeks of American Idol. You'll be terrible. But not to the Lord's heart - you're wonderful. God loves what He hears when there is joy in the Lord.

So, a day of celebration, of joy, led by worship leaders and musicians. They shouted loudly. Their joy could be heard "afar off" (verse 43). Like I said, the word "joy" or "rejoicing" is constantly being used because that's God's will for you and for me. "These things I have written to you that your joy might remain in you, that your joy might be full" (1 John 1:4). Believe that, that it is the Lord's will that you would be filled with joy. And God wants that for you, and He wants that for me. You know, John the Baptist, when he realized that Jesus was indeed the One that he was waiting for, wrote (John 3:29), "He who has the bride is the bridegroom, and the friend of the bridegroom stands by and hears Him, and he rejoices greatly with the bridegroom's voice. Therefore the joy of mine has been fulfilled." "I'm so happy to hear from God. I'm so happy that He showed me the Savior that was to come." Paul writes to the Ephesians. He says to them (Ephesians 5:18), "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks for everything that God has given you

through His Son." I mean, that's the heart of God. If you want to know the heart of God when you show up to come and worship, that would be it.

It might be helpful to know that the word "*chara*," in the New Testament, "joy," is used some seventy times (in the New Testament), and it is always defined as a reference to the condition of the heart or an outlook based upon a spiritual reality. An outlook based upon a spiritual reality. In other words joy, in the Bible, is an internal perspective - God's outlook that has become my own. It's in direct contrast to the joy you find in the world. Because in the world joy is usually an emotional feeling dependent upon favorable outward circumstance. Things work out, "I got a raise, I get an extra few days off, I won the lottery, hey, my team won." There's just - joy comes and goes with great fleeting push. But the world's joy is superficial, and you can have it without God, and you can have it without faith. But think about this for a minute. How much of your life is really in your control? Can you control the weather? If I could, it'd be warmer. I know some of you love it colder. And then you'd control the weather, and then what would we do? I don't know. Can't control the traffic. I don't know if you got anywhere near a mall this weekend. It wasn't pleasant. You can't control your health. Oh, you can take care of yourself, but then you do your best, and then God decides. Can't really ..... How come the house next to me got robbed? How come that guy got hit by a drunk driver? How come I didn't get run over? You really can't control your everyday life, man. That's in God's hands. You can't control what others do, what others say. You can't control your government, or you probably would try - and all of its effects. So, worldly joy is tremendously tenuous because the conditions it depends upon change so quickly.

Heavenly joy is a spiritual condition which means it is a condition or an outlook based upon truth. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be changed by outward circumstances. It sees God ruling over all. It understands that God works in my life for my best interest. It is internal. It is settled. It is true. And so, because of that, you can have the joy of the Lord in the midst of grief. Temporary loss, all kinds of suffering and difficulty. But the joy of the Lord is an anchor for your soul. It's based upon hope. It is aware of God's love. It is aware of God's ways. It is aware of God's promises. It may or may not be emotional; not everyone is. But it is secure. It's unmovable. It doesn't change. And far superior to the world's joy, it can overflow even at the worst of times. The psalmist said, "You have placed gladness in my heart, even more than in the season when my grain or

wine has been increased" (Psalm 4:7). "Even more than a banner income year. Your joy maintains itself in my life."

So, here's true joy. Because the people didn't have anything yet. Outwardly, aside from having a wall, they had nothing else. The enemy was still as tough and aggressive as ever. Their poverty was as real as ever and would continue for generations. They had dug a huge hole for themselves economically. There was going to be a long way out of this place. The only thing that had changed was their understanding of the LORD. And, because of that, biblical joy is always a byproduct of knowing God and following Him. You can't make joy your goal. You get up this morning, and you say, "I'm gonna have joy today!" Good luck. It won't last long. However, as you come to know the Lord, your joy can be established. It can't be undermined. Right? Paul said to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:4), "Great is my boldness of speech towards you, I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation." And you want to say to the guy, "You're a nut!" But he's not a nut. He's just convinced of who God is, and so, even in the worst of times, he finds great joy. He writes the same thing to the Romans. He says (Romans 14:17), "The kingdom of God isn't just eating and drinking, but it's righteousness and it's peace and it's joy in the Holy Spirit." That's how the kingdom of God operates. When the prophet Habakkuk began his prophecy (if you've read it before), it was really doom and gloom. He was so upset with God that he didn't feel like God had done a thing in the lives of His people, that He had forsaken them; and he complains about it to the LORD. The LORD explains to him what He is doing. He doesn't really like what he hears, but he just sits down and says, "Well, I'll just see how this works out." And by the time you get to the end of chapter 3, it is Habakkuk who writes (Habakkuk 3:17), "Even though the fig tree hasn't blossomed yet, there isn't any fruit on the vines; the labor of the olives is failing, there's no food in the fields; the flocks have been cut off from the fold, and yet I'm going to rejoice in the LORD and find my joy in the God of my salvation." Because He's the LORD, and He's going to take care of this. And he was convinced - not of what he saw yet but of what he knew. And he changes his tune based solely upon what he understands about the LORD.

If you go back to chapter 8, where the revival took place and the teaching began, you will read (there in verse 12) that "the people went away from the teaching to eat and drink, and they rejoiced greatly because they understood the words declared to them." They knew God. And knowing God, they could find great joy. So, Isaiah said the same thing (Isaiah 61:10), "Rejoice in the LORD. Find joy, my

soul, in the LORD. He has clothed me with the garments of salvation." He's taken care of me.

I think the problem for us, so often, is that we balk in our faith, don't turn our eyes to Jesus, and still try to equivocate the joy God promises with the joy the world offers. "Oh, Lord, if You could just bless me, I could have some joy. If You could just give me what I want, I could have some joy." But that's not the way the Bible works. In fact, if you're afraid, for example, and there's fear in your heart, the Bible will tell you (Isaiah 41:10), "Don't be afraid, don't be dismayed, God is your God. He'll strengthen you and help you and uphold you." And if you believe that, you'll have joy. Rather than being worried, look, I'm going to trust the Lord. God's faithful to me. He's able to take care of me. There's always an answer in the Bible for the situation you find yourself. And it's always the same - go back and look to the Lord. John was 90 years old when he wrote 1 John. And, as he began his first epistle (1 John 1), he talked to them about having seen the Lord and walked with Him and held Him and beheld the Word of life. He said, "I remember like it was yesterday." It was sixty years later. But then he says to them (verse 4), "I'm writing these things to you that your joy may be full." Let God fill you with His joy. It's a necessary thing. Jesus pointed out over and over that abiding in Him would bring you joy. In fact, He even prayed for it in John 17:13. He said, "Father, I've spoken Your word to them in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

So here's the picture of revival, and it's a huge revival, and it lasts for a generation at least. But here's what we see - a genuine understanding of who God is produces this wonderful joy. So, the secret of joy - and it's not a very well-kept one - is to stay in fellowship with God in prayer and obedience and worship and in learning His Word. That will bring joy into your life. The more you know of Him, the more you'll have joy. I think about Paul in that Roman jail cell, awaiting the results of his capital punishment trial. He hadn't done anything wrong, and yet he was waiting for Nero to sign off on his release or on his death. And he would sign off on his release, early on. But Paul didn't know that. So he's in prison, he's innocent. It looks pretty grim. Nero's nuts. Who knows what he's going to do? And out of this pressured, unfair, scary, depressing place, Paul writes the book of Philippians - a book solely about joy. In fact, he says in chapter 4:4 (the key verse), "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" So how's your joy doin'? How are you in the joy department? What's going on in your life when it comes to joy? What a witness we could be to the world. Jesus, just before His arrest, prepared His

disciples, and He warned them that their joy was going to be turned to sorrow (John 16:20). "But just hang in there because your sorrow's going to be turned to joy, and it's going to be joy that you're going to have that no one's going to be able to take from you." He told that to the disciples days before His death, hours before His death. So, Paul and Silas in Philippi were sharing the love of Jesus. They got beaten and thrown in jail, and you read (in Acts 16:25) at midnight they were up singin' hymns, and the prisoners were listening to them; and it certainly had an effect on the prison guard - the one who watched over them. There's something to be said for having a joyful life.

And as Nehemiah looks back over that dedication day, as I said, few things had changed externally - still in jeopardy by their enemies, still vastly outnumbered, poverty stricken, living in debt. The only thing that had changed was their understanding of God and His goodness to them. That had changed. And, as a result, they were changed.

So, how's your joy? And maybe this is a good measure. Your joy is an accurate reflection of what you understand about God - about what He's done, about what He's promised to do, and what He will do if you'll but look to Him.

I can imagine what Sanballat and Tobias and some of these other guys were doing. They're building their house on the sinking sands of circumstance, and here're God's people rejoicing. It's a pretty good chapter to run into on Thanksgiving weekend. I had that all planned, all along. (Laughing)

Next week, we'll take the first half of chapter 13. Would you read ahead? Because we're actually going to read verses next week. And then we'll close out with this study and Christmas and New Year's as well.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
November 27, 2017