

FIRST CHRONICLES

Introduction:

It is a challenge for twenty-first modern man to settle down for a study of the book of *First Chronicles* and struggle through the first nine chapters of genealogy. The question can present itself whether Paul overlooked this book when he wrote to Timothy: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹

J. Sidlow Baxter, in *Explore the Book*, writes about those genealogies: “Nine chapters of genealogical tables! What waste of space! Nay, rather, what blindness to think so! No part of the Chronicles is more important. Such lines of descent were of sacred importance to all godly Jews, and rightly so, for they knew that their nation, besides being the repository of a special Divine revelation, was the possessor of wonderful Divine promises reaching on to unborn generations. The chronicler himself knew well enough that these genealogies reveal the selective process of Divine election right from Adam downwards, and that the covenant line of redemptive purpose was to culminate in the Messiah. Especially did the preservation of the trunk and the main branches of Israel’s family tree become vital after the Babylonian exile (when the Chronicles were written). Families had been uprooted by the thousands. Connections had been broken. Many records had been lost (see for instance Ezra ii. 59), and Judah’s archives must have become largely disintegrated even where not actually destroyed. Our chronicler’s list links the *pre*-Exile with the *post*-Exile period; for (as should be clearly grasped) chapter ix. 2-34 concerns the resettlement in Judea after the Exile. The break is marked by the first verse of that chapter, which should really be the last verse of the preceding chapter. The *Angus Bible Handbook* remarks: ‘These tables give the sacred line through which the promise was transmitted for nearly 3,500 years, a fact unexampled in the history of the human race.’”

Title of the Book:

The Tyndale Commentary states about the title of *Chronicles*: “The English title of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles has an unusual history. It originates neither from the original Hebrew, nor (despite the fact that ‘chronicle’ comes from a Greek word *chronikon*) from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was not in fact until the fourth century AD that Jerome, the famous Bible translator, first applied the term ‘Chronicle’ to these books. He suggested in the prologue to his Latin translation of Samuel and Kings that in place of the Greek title *Paraleipomena* ... usually given to the work, ‘we might more plainly call it the chronicle (*chronikon*) of the whole of sacred history.’ Though Jerome wrote no commentary on Chronicles and retained the traditional Greek title, his proposal eventually became the basis of the title now used in the English Bible. The mediating influence came from Luther, whose German title, *Die Chronika*, passed into English when Bible translations proliferated during the Reformation period.

Despite its comparatively late appearance, ‘chronicle’ is a good idiomatic translation of the expression *dibʿere hayyamim*, the accepted Hebrew title of the work. The phrase means literally ‘the events of the days,’ i.e. ‘annal, chronicle,’ and though it appears only once in the body of Chronicles (1 Chr. 27:24), it became associated with the work through its frequent appearance in Kings (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31). It may well have been used as a title for Chronicles from quite early on, judging by the similar usage of the phrase in other Old Testament books of the same general period (cf. Neh.

¹ II Tim. 3:16, 17

12:23; Esth. 2:23; 6:1; 10:2). The Greek translators of the Old Testament, however, produced a quite different title, viz., *Paraleipomena*, ‘the things omitted,’ i.e. omitted from Samuel and Kings. This reflected a rather different understanding of the book from that implied by the Hebrew title, and it is the Greek approach which has had much the greater influence on the church’s view of Chronicles down the centuries. Unfortunately it also contributed to the book’s widespread neglect, since the Greek title implied that Chronicles was a kind of supplement or appendix and was therefore of only marginal value in the Old Testament.

The division of Chronicles into two parts, viz. 1 and 2 Chronicles, goes back to the Septuagint, though it is attested no earlier than the third century AD. In the Hebrew tradition, it is no older than the first printed edition of the Hebrew Bible in 1448 AD. This division was probably made for practical reasons, and has no other significance. On the contrary, the textual history of the Hebrew Bible as well as the contents and ideology of 1 and 2 Chronicles show that the two books are really a single unit. Once this is recognized, the length and scope of the work make clear that it is an extremely important part of the Old Testament. Its subject matter covers the whole of Israelite history from creation (1 Chr. 1:1) to near the author’s own time (1 Chr. 9:2-34), and in terms of number of chapters it is the third largest compilation in the Old Testament, after Psalms and Isaiah.”

The Tyndale Commentary gives a lengthy explanation of the message of Chronicles, of which we copy the following:

(a) Covenant

According to Chronicles, the Davidic covenant is that element which most clearly expresses the meaning of Israel’s continuing life as the people of God. Though this form of covenant is explicitly mentioned in only three passages (2 Chr. 7:18; 13:5; 21:7), it is frequently referred to, especially in relation to God’s promises to David (e.g. 1 Chr. 17:18, 23, 26; 2 Chr. 1:9; 6:10, 15, 42; 21:7; 23:3). It is also the headstream out of which flow two of the major tributaries running through the books of Chronicles, namely the Davidic dynasty (1 Chr. 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chr. 6:10, 16; 2 Chr. 13:8; 23:3), and the Solomonic temple (1 Chr. 17:12; 22:6-11; 28:2-10; 2 Chr. 6:7-11). In its foundations and visible expression, therefore, the Davidic covenant is clearly central to the thought of Chronicles. ...

The idea of God as the inspirer and maintainer of the covenant is strengthened by an interest in divine election which is unparalleled outside Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. God’s choice of people and places occurs directly in nine passages, only three of which have any kind of parallel in the earlier sources. In addition to this, the election concept clearly undergirds the theology of the genealogies (1 Chr. 1 – 9), even though the verb ‘to choose’ does not appear. ...

Election in Chronicles is very closely associated with the covenant, as in Deuteronomy and to a lesser extent elsewhere in the Old Testament. ...

God’s guaranteed commitment to Israel is also expressed through a strengthened emphasis on the permanence and inviolability of the covenant. The well-known refrain from the Psalms, ‘For his love endures for ever,’ often occurs, for example though none of the quotations is paralleled in the books of Kings (e.g. 1 Chr. 16:41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21). Its frequent appearance is an indication that the covenant’s continuation depended on God’s love rather than on Israel’s achievements. ... In the Chronicler’s own material, mention is often made of either the eternal nature of the covenant or the unchangeableness of God’s purposes. God intends to dwell permanently in the Jerusalem temple (1 Chr. 23:25; 2 Chr. 30:8), where the priests and Levites are to minister to him for ever (1 Chr. 15:2; 23:13). The land has been promised for ever to Israel (2 Chr. 20:7), as long as they are obedient to his commands (1 Chr. 28:8). The kingship granted to David’s family is an irrevocable gift, a promise that God personally guarantees (1 Chr. 22:10; 28:4, 7; 2 Chr. 13:5). Abijah’s quotation of the phrase

‘covenant of salt’ (2 Chr. 13:5; cf. Num. 18:19) is a particularly striking way of indicating that God always preserves and protects his relationship with Israel.

Abijah also mentions another very important and distinctive aspect of God’s involvement in the covenant concept in Chronicles, namely, the kingdom of God. Apart from the Psalms and Daniel, Chronicles is the only book in the Old Testament which deals with the notion of the kingdom of God in any detail. Since this kingdom is revealed in Chronicles through the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem temple, it is clearly a covenant concept. ...

The Chronicler also sees the positive value of covenant law as something which was continually relevant and effective rather than a relic left over from the past. The law, which is variously described as ‘the law of the LORD (1 Chr. 16:40; 2 Chr. 31:3), ‘the law of Moses’ (2 Chr. 23:18; 30:16) or ‘the word of the LORD through Moses’ (2 Chr. 35:6; cf. 1 Chr. 15:15; etc.), often occurs in passages which have no parallel and is consistently regarded as God’s ultimate expression of his authority in Israel. Though David and other kings exercise authority, their authority is dependent on God’s gift and is subject to the requirements of the law; just as it is for everyone else. It is also a limited authority, in that David’s interpretation of God’s law is restricted to the specific areas of organizing temple rituals and personnel and establishing musical worship in the temple. Though this has led to David being viewed as a second Moses, it only serves to underline the supremacy of the Mosaic law itself. It is the Mosaic law which is the basis of a succession of reform movements, which are given greater prominence as a succession of related events than in Kings. Though Josiah’s reform is well known (2 Chr. 34 – 35 = 2 Kgs 22 – 23), the Chronicler mentions in addition a nationwide campaign under Jehoshaphat to instruct the population in ‘the scroll of the law of the LORD’ (2 Chr. 17:7-9; cf. 19:4-11), and a covenant renewal ceremony under Asa based on the tradition of the Sinai covenant (2 Chr. 15:12-15). A covenant also took place in Hezekiah’s reign (2 Chr. 29:10) reinstating the pattern of worship required by the Mosaic law (2 Chr. 29:15-35) and David’s supplementary instructions about the Levites (2 Chr. 29:25-26, 30). These various incidents clearly demonstrated that in the Chronicler’s eyes the law remained a living concept which needed to be periodically restored to its rightful priority in Israel’s life.

Equally, the Chronicler’s confidence in God’s unshakeable purposes for David has not been achieved at the cost of ignoring the weaknesses of David and Solomon, though it is often alleged that he has presented them as spotless kings who could do no wrong. ... The major priority of the Chronicler’s view of David and Solomon is that God has given their family his gift of kingship and confirmed it through Solomon’s obedience in building the temple. He mistakes the real nature of God’s holiness in the ark (1 Chr. 13) and his selfish pride prevents him from understanding the real nature of Israel as God’s people (1 Chr. 21). The temple therefore becomes as much a means of atonement for David’s sin as a sign of God’s covenant faithfulness. The concentration on the temple in the account of Solomon merely confirms this view. Solomon’s obedience (cf. 1 Chr. 28:2-10; 2 Chr. 6:3-10, 14-17), it is also necessary for all in their need of forgiveness because ‘there is no-one who does not sin’ (2 Chr. 6:36). ...

The fact and quality of Israel’s relationship with God was more important than their current political situation, and their status as God’s people was of greater value than their citizenship of the Persian or the Greek empire. Whatever had happened to Israel in the past, nothing could change the fact of their relationship with God, and the Chronicler would certainly have agreed with Paul’s statement that nothing ‘will be able to separate us from the love of God’ (Rom. 8:39).

(b) Israel as the people of the covenant

What were the practical implications of being bound to God in a covenant relationship? The Chronicler’s answer to this question was almost certainly different from that of most of his contemporaries and also from the work of Ezra-Nehemiah. Whereas many post-exile Israelites tended to

think of themselves as a rather dejected, unambitious, guilty, tight-fisted, defensive group of strugglers, the Chronicler was a theological optimist who wanted to bring fresh hope to his people.

The most crucial issue for the Chronicler's readers was their attitude towards other Israelites past and present. The author reminded them first that their ancestry did not go back just to David but could be traced to Adam himself (1 Chr. 1:1). The post-exile community was part of what God has planned, not just for Israel, but from the very creation of the human race. They enjoyed a special place among the nations of the world and were not therefore ultimately subject to the whims of foreign political and military decision makers. Equally important, however, was that the Israelites recognized their true breadth, for they were not restricted to those members of Judah and Benjamin who formed the majority of the post-exilic community. According to the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 2:1 – 9:1, they were descended from all Jacob's twelve sons. In fact, the Chronicler goes out of his way to stress that the old divisions of north and south were really a consequence of a temporary judgment on Solomon's excesses, but that every opportunity should be taken to rebuild the whole community. Cyrus' invitation for the exiles to return is addressed, for example to 'whoever among you out of all his people' (2 Chr. 36:23), offering the chance to anyone of Israelite descent to return to the land of Israel (cf. 1 Chr. 9:3; 11:1-3; 12:38-40; 2 Chr. 11:13-17; 15:9; 30:1-12; 35:18). . . .

Two particular covenant blessings stand out in Chronicles, of which the first is Israel's presence in the Promised Land. The fact that the author updated the details of those who repopulated Jerusalem under Nehemiah confirms the importance of the land for the post-exile community. There is also a sense that Israel's possession of the land and enjoyment of its 'rest' was something for each generation to experience afresh. The whole issue of the land is traced back to God's covenant promise to Abraham (1 Chr. 16:15-18; 2 Chr. 20:7; cf. 1 Chr. 28:8), where Israel's presence in the land was seen from the beginning as a matter of gift rather than of right. Attention is also focused on tribal expansion into different parts of the Promised Land (especially 1 Chr. 4:24 – 5:26). Though the land had been given to Israel, it also had to be occupied with God's help, as is beautifully expressed in Jabez' simple prayer, 'O that you would bless me and enlarge my territory' (1 Chr. 4:10). Similarly, David's completion of Joshua's task of occupying the land is vital, since it is a precondition for building the temple. On the other hand, threats to Israel's presence in the land are regarded as a challenge to God's declared purposes (cf. 2 Chr. 20:6-11; 32:9-20). The greatest threat was of course the exile, though its effects could be reversed by repentance (2 Chr. 30:9) and active faith (2 Chr. 36:23).

(c) The temple as the place of covenant-centered worship

The Jerusalem temple and its system of worship clearly dominates much of Chronicles. Most of David's reign is given over to temple preparation and the whole of Solomon's is designated around the temple's construction. The temple is also given a prominence in the reigns of Abijah, Uzziah, and especially Hezekiah that it does not have in the books of Kings (cf. 1 Chr. 13, 26, 29 – 31), and the Levites, who provided the temple personnel, receive frequent mention.

The Chronicler's interest in the temple, however, has less to do with its physical appearance than with its meaning, as illustrated by his abbreviation of Kings' account of the temple's construction (2 Chr. 3 – 4) and his expansion of the dedication ceremonies (2 Chr. 1 – 7). The Chronicler's view of the temple is not the same as in Kings, where the temple is the Lord's chosen place for Israel's worship in contrast to the idolatrous sanctuaries throughout the land. Though this emphasis has been retained, the Chronicler has given a new priority to another theme present in Kings, namely, the link between the temple and the Davidic covenant. This association is repeatedly mentioned in a series of passages without parallel in Samuel and Kings concerning the two houses that God promised David (1 Chr. 22:6-13; 28:2-10; 2 Chr. 6:4-11, 14-17; 13:4-12). It is also confirmed by Solomon's testimony that God has kept his

promise concerning both houses (2 Chr. 6:10). David's dynasty and Solomon's temple together represent 'the hub of the Lord's kingdom on earth.' ...

The Chronicler was particularly concerned with the temple's personnel, its activities, and the attitudes of its worshippers. Among all the paraphernalia, it is the Levites' various roles in 'service' or 'ministry' that are singled out (e.g. 1 Chr. 23:2-5, 28-32), even above the activities of the priests. The main purpose behind this appears to be to underline the supreme importance of praise and sacrifice. Sacrifice is more prominent in Chronicles than in Kings, as indicated by the use of the post-exile description as 'a house of sacrifice' (2 Chr. 7:12; cf. Ezra 6:3). The Chronicler includes several summaries of the temple's sacrificial ritual in contrast to a single verse on the subject in Kings, so underlining the importance of regular worship (1 Chr. 23:11; 2 Chr. 3:4; 8:13; 13:11; 31:3; cf. 1 Kgs 9:25). ...

(d) The covenant as a basis for restoration

Although the Chronicler is keen to stress Israel's identity as God's covenant people, the nation consistently fell far short of her obligations. Israel's unfaithfulness is one of the most repetitive themes of Chronicles, and one of the main reasons for highlighting the Davidic covenant and the temple is the vital role they play in God's provision for restoration. Attention is again centered on the two words from God, which in addition to their focus on the inviolability of the covenant also affirm God's commitment to forgive and renew his people.

Israel's failure is particularly expressed through two related Hebrew words *mā'al* and *ma'al*, meaning 'to act unfaithfully' and 'unfaithfulness' respectively. Their distribution throughout the work shows that from beginning to end, Israel is guilty before God (1 Chr. 2:7; 2 Chr. 36:14). Because of this unfaithfulness, both the northern and southern kingdoms were subject to the punishment of exile (1 Chr. 5:25-26; 2 Chr. 36:15-20). Individual kings who behaved in the same way suffered various fates such as personal exile (2 Chr. 33:19), the invasion of the land (2 Chr. 12:2; 28:19), or even the loss of their kingship (1 Chr. 10:13-14).

Unfaithfulness is clearly a key term in Chronicles. ...

The example of Israel's infidelity and rejection of God are repeated so often that it seems nothing can deflect God's punishment. Each generation is implicated, even those of the so-called good kings. David fails to recognize the true nature of the ark (1 Chr. 13) and of God's people (1 Chr. 21), Solomon places a heavy yoke on the people (2 Chr. 10:3, 9-11, 14), Asa reverses his previous good policies (2 Chr. 16), and Jehoshaphat is involved in a disastrous alliance with the house of Ahab (2 Chr. 18:1 – 19:3; 20:35-37). Joash turns to idolatry once the restraining influence of his guardian Jehoiada is removed (2 Chr. 24:17-27), Hezekiah succumbs to pride in his own achievements (2 Chr. 32:25, 31), and Josiah fails to recognize God's guidance in the commonsense advice of a foreign king (2 Chr. 35:20-24). Quite apart, therefore, from the kings who were well known for their wicked ways, it is clear in Chronicles that Israel's guilt was due to even the so-called good kings (1 Chr. 21:3, 8; 2 Chr. 19:10; 24:18; cf. 2 Chr. 28:10, 13; 33:23). The result of their behavior was that God was angry (1 Chr. 13:11; 15:13; 2 Chr. 19:2, 10; 24:18; 32:25-26; cf. 2 Chr. 25:15; 28:9, 25; 29:8, 10; 36:16) and inflicted a variety of punishments on them (cf. 1 Chr. 21:7-16; 2 Chr. 12:5; 16:7-10; 20:37). The most serious of these was the reality of the exile, which was seen as much more than the single event of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. The fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC resulted in the experience of exile being shared with the citizens of the south (1 Chr. 5:25-26; 2 Chr. 29:9; 30:6). Despite the good intentions of Hezekiah and Josiah, that experience was never entirely removed, and the threat of final exile gradually gathered momentum during the last few decades of Judah's existence until the point came when there was no respite (2 Chr. 33:11; 34:23-24, 28; 36:4, 6, 10, 20). It is clear that following

Judah's final demise, the whole experience entered deeply into Israel's psyche, and the effects were still felt long after some had begun to return (1 Chr. 9:1-2). ...

It is certainly true that, more than most Old Testament writers, the Chronicler affirms the existence of a strong link between obedience and blessing and between disobedience and judgment in the lifetime of individuals, but this principle is neither simplistic nor automatic. Judgment can be cumulative, for instance, as in the case of the exile or in the way that kings rejected the teachings of the prophets as a whole (cf. 2 Chr. 24:19; 36:16). On other occasions, judgment that is threatened against an individual or nation often does not take place because of a repentant response to a prophetic warning (cf. 1 Chr. 21:13-19; 2 Chr. 12:5; 15:1-8; 36:15). God often sends such warnings in an attempt to prevent his people experiencing greater trouble. Further, the Chronicler's confirmation that there is no-one who does not sin (2 Chr. 6:36) indicates that all deserve judgment. ...

At least three separate aspects require fresh consideration. First, the Chronicler's concern for correlating sin and judgment has more to do with the manner of judgment than the fact of it. He believes strongly in the well-known biblical principle that the punishment ought to fit the crime, as in the expression, 'If you forsake him, he will forsake you' (2 Chr. 15:2; cf. 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 7:19-22), and provides several practical examples (2 Chr. 21:13-18; 24:21-26; 28:23). Judgment that does occur is directly related to the original offence. Secondly, one has to take the many occasions when people do not receive the punishment that is due to them. In contrast to the view that 'for the Chronicler sin always brings judgment and disaster,' the Chronicler's message is much better summarized in David's words: 'Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great' (1 Chr. 21:13). A number of David's descendants are treated more positively than in Kings, not because the Chronicler is more lenient but because he sees in their lives explicit evidence of God's kindness to the undeserving. In fact, it is precisely because the Chronicler does not believe in automatic retribution that his account of rulers such as Solomon, Rehoboam (2 Chr. 11 – 12), Abijah (2 Chr. 13), and especially Manasseh (2 Chr. 33) differs so substantially from that of the Kings.

Thirdly and most importantly, the Chronicler is concerned above all to emphasize the hope of restoration rather than the sad reality of retribution. The key text is undoubtedly 2 Chronicles 7:12-16, in which the temple is presented as the channel for divine forgiveness and restoration according to the principles of the Davidic covenant. The means by which this could take place primarily involved repentance and prayer. The Chronicler certainly believed in the power and reality of prayer, and he gives a number of instances of God's answering those who took their troubles to the LORD, in line with Solomon's basic request (2 Chr. 6:18-42). Those in various kinds of difficulty, even exile, who responded to God's invitation (2 Chr. 7:13-14), received God's forgiveness and his help in their time of need (e.g. 1 Chr. 21:13, 17; 2 Chr. 14:11; 20:1-13; 32:20, 24; 33:13, 19; Heb. 4:16).

5. The origins of Chronicles

(a) *The relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah*

Most of the major literary critical questions relating to the origins of Chronicles depend on one's view of its relationship with Ezra and Nehemiah.

Referring to various schools of interpretation that evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the author of *The Tyndale Commentary* states: "The last two verses of Chronicles (2 Chr. 36:22-23) are also found at the beginning of Ezra (Ezra 1:1-3), though the situation is complicated by the fact that the link between the two is rather less obvious in the Hebrew Bible where Ezra-Nehemiah precedes Chronicles. The usual explanation of this overlap separates the issue of the compilation of the two works from that of their inclusion in the canon. Where the order of the English and Greek Bible suggests that the story of Chronicles is simply continued in Ezra, the reverse order of the books in the Hebrew Bible is

regularly explained as the result of Ezra-Nehemiah being accepted into the canon first as a proper continuation of the history in Samuel-Kings. Chronicles was then added as a supplement to the main account, as implied by its Greek title, ‘the things omitted.’ ...

The abrupt ending to Chronicles, ‘and let him go up (2 Chr. 36:23), makes much more sense as an abbreviation than if it were the original version. Also, the difference between the Hebrew for ‘by the mouth of Jeremiah’ in 2 Chronicles (*bpy*) and Ezra 1:1 (*mpy*) is more easily explained by secondary influence of 2 Chronicles 36:21 on 2 Chronicles 36:22, since the identical expression occurs in both verses.

(b) A Septuagintal work called 1 Esdras moves across the juncture between the two books without interruption and without repeating the overlapping material. This book is an historical narrative which begins in 2 Chronicles 35 – 36 and is followed by the whole of Ezra and by Nehemiah 7:72 – 8:13a, but which also includes limited additional material. ...

(c) Substantial similarities exist between the language of Chronicles and of Ezra-Nehemiah, and extensive lists of the common features were compiled in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. ...

(d) Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah clearly share a number of common interests. These include the temple and its worship, the Mosaic law, covenant renewal, and the sense of continuity between pre- and post-exile Israel. The key question, however, is whether this common ideology is close enough to warrant treating them as a different part of the same work or not. ... The list of examples is surprisingly extensive, and includes David and the Davidic covenant, mixed marriages, the Sabbath and the Levites, the Chronicler’s interest in the patriarch Jacob/Israel as against the exodus and conquest in Ezra-Nehemiah, the fall of the northern kingdom and the fate of its inhabitants, conflict with the northerners, approaches to prophecy and to historiography. The existence of these differences has been widely recognized, and their importance duly acknowledged.

(b) The date and authorship of Chronicles

Any assessment of the date of Chronicles is inevitably tied up with issues relating to the composition and development of the work. If, for example, Chronicles is assumed to be linked with Ezra-Nehemiah, then the date of Chronicles cannot be earlier than the latest items in Ezra-Nehemiah. On the other hand, if the Ezra-Nehemiah issue is put aside and in addition the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1 – 9 are treated largely as a supplement deriving from a later hand than that of the Chronicler, then the rest of Chronicles could conceivably be located as early as the restoration period toward the end of the sixth century BC.

It is no surprise therefore that assessments of the date of Chronicles have varied enormously, from as early as 529-515 BC ... to as late as 200 BC ... The clearest evidence all occurs in the opening genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1 – 9, though it is disputed how much of this section belonged originally with the rest of the work. Two passages are of special interest. The first concerns the list of those who repopulated Jerusalem (1 Chr. 9:2-34), which is apparently dependent on a similar list in Nehemiah 11:3-19. On the basis of change to some of the names and the Chronicler’s small increase in the numbers of those settling in the city, the Chronicles version seems to belong to a period approximately half a generation later than Nehemiah’s list. What is less certain is whether 1 Chronicles 9:2-34 is a little later than Nehemiah in the late fifth century BC or whether it depends on the reference to the great-grandsons of two of Nehemiah’s contemporaries (Uzzi from Mattaniah’s line, Neh. 11:22, and Jaddua the high priest, Neh. 12:11, 22) and therefore belongs to the first half of the fourth century. The second passage is the list of post-exile Davidic descendants in 1 Chronicles 3:17-24, though again its interpretation is dogged by uncertainty. The list may extend for a minimum of five or a maximum of ten

generations after Zerubbabel, who was governor in Jerusalem towards the end of the sixth century BC. It could therefore reach either to the end of the fifth century or to the late fourth century. ...

As to who the author of Chronicles may have been, nothing can be concluded with certainty. There is some possibility that he may have been a Levite, and the adjustments made in 1 Chronicles 16:34-34 to part of Psalm 106 may reflect his Levitical activity as one who was involved in the ministries of leading in praise and interpreting Scripture. It is also very likely that as a Levite he would have had access to some of the source material which lies behind the work. Like most biblical authors, however, he must remain anonymous, known to posterity only by his mysterious title, 'The Chronicler.'"

Although the author of *The Tyndale Commentary* on 1 Chronicles continues in greater length with his introductory observations, we leave him at this point to go to the division of the book, which is also copied from the same commentary.

Outline of First Chronicles:

Introduction:..... 1

1. THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL (1 Chr. 1:1 – 9:44)..... 14

 a. Adam to Esau (1:1-54)..... 15

 i. Adam to Noah (1:-4a)..... 16

 ii. The descendants of Noah (1:4b-23)..... 17

 iii. Shem to Abraham (1:24-27)..... 18

 iv. Abraham (1:28-34)..... 19

 v. Esau and Edom (1:35-54)..... 19

 b. The tribes of Israel (2:1 – 9:1)..... 21

 i. The sons of Israel (2:1-2)..... 21

 ii. The tribe of Judah (2:3 – 4:23)..... 21

 a. Judah to Hezron (2:3-8)..... 22

 b. The descendants of Ram (2:9-17)..... 22

 c. The descendants of Caleb (2:18-24)..... 23

 d. The descendants of Jerahmeel (2:25-41)..... 24

 e. Further descendants of Caleb (2:42-55)..... 25

 f. The royal family of David (3:1-24)..... 26

 g. Further clans of Judah (4:1-23)..... 27

 iii. The tribe of Simeon (4:24-43)..... 31

 iv. The Transjordanian Tribes (5:1-26)..... 33

 a. The tribe of Reuben (5:1-10)..... 33

 b. The tribe of Gad (5:11-22)..... 35

 c. The half tribe of Manasseh (5:23-26)..... 36

 v. The tribes of Levi (6:1-81)..... 37

 a. The Aaronite high priests (6:1-15; Mt, v. 27-41)..... 37

 b. The Levites’ genealogy (6:16-30; MT, 6:1-15)..... 38

 c. The Levitical musicians’ genealogy (6:31-48; MT, 6:16-33)..... 40

 d. The task of the Aaronite high priests (6:49-53; MT, 6:34-38)..... 41

 e. The settlements of the Levites (6:54-81; MT, 6:39-66)..... 41

 vi. The West Jordan tribes (7:1-40)..... 43

 a. The tribe of Issachar (7:1-5)..... 44

 b. The tribe of Benjamin (7:6-12a)..... 44

 c. The tribe of Dan (?) 7:12b)..... 45

| | |
|---|----|
| d. The tribe of Naphtali (7:13) | 45 |
| e. The half tribe of Manasseh (7:14-19)..... | 45 |
| f. The tribe of Ephraim (7:20-29), 20-27 | 46 |
| g. The tribe of Asher (7:30-40)..... | 47 |
| vii. The tribe of Benjamin (8:1-40)..... | 47 |
| a. Settlement of Benjaminite families (8:1-28)..... | 48 |
| b. Genealogy of Saul’s family (8:29-40) | 50 |
| ix. Conclusion to the tribal lists (9:1) | 51 |
| c. Repopulating Jerusalem (9:2-34)..... | 51 |
| i. Resettling the towns (9:2)..... | 53 |
| ii. Laymen in Jerusalem (9:3-9)..... | 53 |
| iii. Priests in Jerusalem (9:10-13) | 54 |
| iv. Levites in Jerusalem (9:14-16) | 54 |
| v. Gatekeepers in Jerusalem (9:17-32)..... | 55 |
| vi. Musicians in Jerusalem (9:33)..... | 57 |
| vii. Conclusion (9:34) | 57 |
| d. Genealogy of Saul’s family (9:35-44) | 57 |
| 2. THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON (1 Chr. 10:1 – 2 Chr. 9:51)..... | 58 |
| a. Transferring the kingdom to David (10:1 – 12:40)..... | 58 |
| i. The end of Saul’s house (10:1-14)..... | 58 |
| a. Saul’s death (10:1-5)..... | 58 |
| b. The end of Saul’s house (10:6-7)..... | 59 |
| c. Saul’s corpse (10:8-10)..... | 60 |
| d. Saul’s burial (10:11-12)..... | 60 |
| e. The transfer of Saul’s kingdom (10:13-14)..... | 61 |
| ii. All Israel recognizes David as king (11:1 – 12:40)..... | 62 |
| a. David anointed king over all Israel at Hebron (11:1-3) | 62 |
| b. David’s capital city (11:4-9)..... | 64 |
| c. David’s mighty men (11:10-47)..... | 65 |
| d. Tribal support at Ziklag: the Benjaminites (12:1-7)..... | 69 |
| e. Tribal support at the stronghold: the Gadites (12:8-15)..... | 70 |
| f. Tribal support at the stronghold: the Benjaminites and Judahites (12:16-18)..... | 72 |
| g. Tribal support at Ziklag: the Manassites (12:19-22)..... | 72 |
| h. Tribal support at Hebron (12:23-37)..... | 73 |

- i. Celebration of David as king at Hebron (12:38-40) 75
 - b. David brings the ark to Jerusalem (13:1 – 16:43)..... 75
 - i. The ark begins its journey (13:1-14)..... 75
 - a. The decision to move the ark (13:1-4) 75
 - b. The action of moving the ark (13:5-8)..... 77
 - c. God’s deadly holiness (13:9-12)..... 79
 - d. God’s unconditional blessing (13:13-14)..... 80
 - ii. God’s blessings on David’s kingdom (14:1-17)..... 81
 - a. David’s palace (14:1-2)..... 81
 - b. David’s sons (14:3-7)..... 82
 - c. David’s Philistine wars (14:8-16) 83
 - d. David’s fame (14:17) 85
 - iii. The ark completes its journey (15:1-29)..... 86
 - a. Preparing a place for the ark (15:1-3) 86
 - b. Preparing the people to carry the ark (15:4-10)..... 87
 - c. Preparing for a joyful celebration (15:16-24) 88
 - d. The people’s joyful celebration (15:25-29) 90
 - iv. Blessing, worship and praise (16:1-43) 91
 - a. Blessing for every Israelite (16:1-3) 92
 - b. Levites appointed at Jerusalem (16:4-7)..... 93
 - c. The Lord is king (16:8-36)..... 95
 - v. Covenant promises (16:8-22)..... 95
 - vi. God is king over all the earth (16:23-33)..... 97
 - vii. Prayer for deliverance (16:34-36)..... 100
 - a. Levites appointed at Jerusalem (16:37-38) 102
 - b. Levites appointed at Gibeon (16:39-42) 102
 - c. Blessing for David’s household (16:43) 104
 - c. God’s covenant with David (17:1-27)..... 104
 - i. David’s good intentions (17:1-2)..... 104
 - ii. The promise of the Davidic covenant (17:3-15)..... 105
 - a. Introduction (3-4a) 105
 - b. David is not to build a temple (17:4b-6)..... 106
 - c. God has kept his earlier promises (17:7-10a) 106
 - d. God will build a house for David (17:10b-14)..... 107

| | |
|--|-----|
| e. Conclusion (17:15)..... | 109 |
| iii. David's Prayer (17:16-27)..... | 109 |
| a. Praise for God's uniqueness (17:16-22)..... | 109 |
| b. Request for God to confirm his promises (17:23-27)..... | 112 |
| d. David's empire (18:1 – 20:8)..... | 113 |
| i. David's victories over the nations (18:1-17)..... | 113 |
| a. Victory over the Philistines (18:1)..... | 114 |
| b. Victories of the Moabites (18:2)..... | 114 |
| c. Victories over Hadadezer of Zobah (18:3-10)..... | 115 |
| d. David's gifts (18:11)..... | 117 |
| e. Victory over the Edomites (18:12-13)..... | 117 |
| f. David's cabinet (18:14-17)..... | 117 |
| ii. David's victories over the Ammonites (19:1-20:3)..... | 118 |
| a. First victory under Joab (19:1-15)..... | 118 |
| iii. Ammonite insults (19:1-5)..... | 118 |
| iv. Preparations for war (19:6-9)..... | 119 |
| v. Victory under Joab (19:10-15)..... | 120 |
| a. Second victory under David (19:16-19)..... | 121 |
| b. Final victory (20:1-3)..... | 123 |
| vi. Victories over the Philistines (20:4-8)..... | 124 |
| e. David's preparation for the temple (21:1 – 29:30)..... | 126 |
| i. David's sin and God's grace (21:1 – 22:1)..... | 126 |
| a. The census (21:1-6)..... | 126 |
| b. A second choice (21:7-14)..... | 128 |
| c. God's and man's repentance (21:15-17)..... | 130 |
| d. A new altar (21:18-27)..... | 131 |
| e. A new house of God (21:28 – 22:1)..... | 133 |
| ii. David's initial preparations for the temple (22:2-19)..... | 133 |
| a. Preparing workers and materials (22:2-5)..... | 133 |
| b. Preparing the temple builders (22:6-16)..... | 135 |
| c. Preparing Israel's leaders (22:17-19)..... | 138 |
| iii. The Levites prepare for the temple (23:1 – 26:32)..... | 138 |
| a. Solomon appointed king (23:1)..... | 138 |
| b. Census of Levites (23:2-6a)..... | 139 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| c. Clans of Levites (23:6b-23) | 140 |
| d. Groups of Levites (23:24 – 26:32)..... | 141 |
| iv. Levites at the temple (23:24-32)..... | 141 |
| v. Priests and Levitical assistants (24:1-31)..... | 144 |
| vi. Musicians (25:1-31)..... | 149 |
| vii. Gatekeepers (26:1-19) | 152 |
| viii. Treasurers (26:20-28) | 156 |
| ix. Levite officials throughout the land (26:29-32)..... | 157 |
| x. Other leaders prepare for the temple (23:1-34)..... | 158 |
| a. The divisions of the army (27:1-15)..... | 158 |
| b. The officers of the tribes (27:16-24)..... | 160 |
| c. The officers of the king (27:25-34)..... | 161 |
| xi. David’s final preparations for the temple (28:1 – 29:25) | 163 |
| a. David speaks about the temple builder (28:1-10) | 163 |
| b. David tell Solomon God’s plan (28:11-19) | 167 |
| c. David commissions Solomon (28:20-21)..... | 168 |
| d. David’s appeal for Israel’s consecration (29:1-5)..... | 170 |
| e. Gifts for the temple (29:6-9) | 170 |
| f. David’s prayer (29:10-20) | 171 |
| g. Solomon anointed king (29:21-25) | 175 |
| xii. Concluding formula for David (29:26-30) | 176 |

1. THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL (1 Chr. 1:1 – 9:44)

The Tyndale Commentary opens the study of the text with the following story: “A Jewish student was once asked by a fellow Gentile student to identify his favorite part of the Bible. ‘The first eight chapters of First Chronicles,’ he replied. The Gentile was amazed, but as his friend started to give his reasons, he began to understand something of the mysterious attraction of these chapters. ‘From my (Gentile) point of view,’ he reflected, ‘I have often wondered why God allowed so much space in his Word to be ‘wasted’ on such trivia. But to a Hebrew (and to many other kinship-oriented societies around the world), genealogical lists of this nature demonstrate in the clearest way the specificity of God’s love and concern that lie at the heart of the gospel.’

The Chronicler’s first readers, however, are unlikely to have seen things quite so positively. Despite their Jewish heritage, they were too preoccupied with an overwhelming identity crisis and a deep sense of guilt and shame to give much attention to the meaning of God’s love. Tucked away and often ignored in a far-flung corner of the Persian Empire, the largest empire the world had yet seen, they had nagging doubts about whether Israel could ever again really be God’s people. Furthermore, many Jews felt that their present sad state of affairs was God’s will, a punishment for past sins. And yet these seemingly intractable problems are almost certainly the kind of issues that the lists and genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1 – 9 are intended to confront. The sense of belonging and of continuity which they conveyed were clearly gospel or good news as far as the author was concerned. They show that the Chronicler’s generation had not after all been cast off from their historical, geographical, and spiritual moorings. If they would only look back, look around, and look up, they would see that they still belonged to ‘Israel,’ and that their present predicament was not hopeless.

Three specific answers to their problems are revealed in chapters 1 – 9:

(a) A summary of the ‘generations’ of Genesis from Adam to Edom/Esau, shows that all the nations were God’s and therefore part of his special purposes for Israel (1:1-54);

(b) The present small Jewish community was still descended from Jacob’s twelve sons and from ‘all Israel’ who had inherited the Promised Land (2:1 – 9:1);

(c) The exile had not cut the umbilical cord of the post-exile community’s life, for those who now lived and worshipped in Jerusalem remained heirs of the promises of God (1:2-14). This basically simple framework of 1 Chronicles 1 – 9 contains various patterns of lists and genealogies. Names can be listed vertically, usually in descending order from the oldest (e.g. 6:1-5), though an ascending order starting with the most recent name is occasionally used (e.g. 6:33-47). Another variation, found in chapter 1, is a descending order where the key family in each generation (not necessarily related to the oldest son) is left to last. The forms of expression also vary considerably. The commonest formula is ‘the sons of X: Y, Z, etc.’ (e.g. 2:1-9), but one also finds bare lists of names (e.g. 1:24-27) as well as the famous ‘begat’ formula (cf. AV), though the latter is rare (e.g. 2:10-13, 36-41).

This variety is a strong indication that the lists are not the Chronicler’s invention, but that he has fused together for his own purposes lists of varying characters from different periods. Some are based on earlier Scripture, as in chapter 1 and in some of the shorter tribal lists in 4:24-5:26; 7:1-40. Other are taken from various official sources, such as temple and tribal records, some of them connected with military service. Most of the lists, with the major exception of 9:2-34, are pre-exile in origin, though again there is much variety.

The result appears to be a real hodgepodge, sometimes with obvious gaps (e.g. no details are given about the tribe of Zebulun, though cf. 2:1). Closer examination, however, reveals the presence of certain connecting threads which give the patchwork a real sense of design:

- (a) Israel belongs to the past, but must not live in it. The fact that the Davidic line (3:17-24) and the sketch of post-exilic Israel (9:2-34) come near, or even down to, the Chronicler's own generation shows that the lists are not intended to be a historian's delight. A proper sense of history involves understanding the ways of God in past days so that faith may be renewed in the present (cf. Phil. 1:16).
- (b) Certain people have a special significance in the purposes of God. In the earliest period, Adam (1:1) and Israel (Jacob); 1:34; 2:1-2) are the key names, as representatives of God's creative and redemptive work for and through humanity. God's purposes then continue through three tribes, Judah (2:3 – 3:24), Levi (ch. 6), and Benjamin (7:6-12; 8:1-40; 9:35-44), who occupy the lion's share of the tribal lists and form an overall framework for them. David's continuing line in Judah (3:1-24) sustains a hope that Israel's kingship could reappear, while Levi's presence indicates ongoing provision for atonement, sacrifice and praise (6:1-8).
- (c) Occupation of the Promised Land remains a priority. Much of chapters 2 – 8 is in fact concerned with showing how all the tribes had live in the land, even though this sometimes involved both pain and prayer (cf. 4:9-10). The corollary of this for the Chronicler's readers was the need to go on committing themselves to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple (cf. 9:2-34).
- (d) The nations of the world belong to God. Though the list of nations is confined to chapter 1, the vital point is that their genealogy is also Israel's genealogy. There is no dividing line. All are part of God's sovereign purposes, with the nations having to acknowledge God's power (cf. 1 Chr. 14:17; 2 Chr. 20:29), and even mighty Cyrus fulfilling God's prophetic word (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22-23). Not only need Israel not feel threatened, they could even take a positive view, for Abraham (1:27-34) was God's promised source of blessing for the nations (cf. Gen. 12:2-3).
- (e) All types of people have a place within the purposes of God. The good, the bad, and the ugly are all included in the lists. All the tribes are there, including both sides of the old north-south divide. Foreigners and those involved in mixed marriages are included (cf. 2:3, 34-35; 4:18). Ordinary people, totally forgotten apart from the record of their names, are placed alongside some of the great names of Israel's past. The people of God in all their variety and their failure are in fact the central subject of the lists. In the compiler's mind, these were certainly not dry old genealogies. They deal with real places and real people, who despite Israel's 'unfaithfulness' ... all have a role in God's continuing activity."

a. Adam to Esau (1:1-54)

Halley's Bible Handbook introduces chapters 1-9 with the following: "These genealogies seem to have had for their immediate object the re-settling of the land according to the public records. Those who had returned from the Captivity were entitled to lands formerly held in their own families. In the Old Testament land had been apportioned to families, and could not be sold in perpetuity out of the family, see Lev. 25.

These 9 chapters of genealogies form the generation-to-generation tie-up of all preceding Biblical history. They need not be read for devotional purposes, as often as some other parts of Scripture. But in reality these, and similar genealogies, are the skeleton frame work of the Old Testament, the thing that binds the whole Bible together, and gives it unity, and makes it look like real HISTORY, not legend."

The way the genealogical list is written strikes us as unusually abrupt. The list gives only names without the use of any verb listing one name to the other. The NIV tries to remedy this by inserting "the sons of ..." in v. 4, although this is not in the Hebrew text.

The Tyndale Commentary introduces this section with: “The opening chapter has a majestic sweep, covering the entire period from Adam (v. 1) to Esau and Jacob (always known in Chronicles as Israel, v.34; cf. 2:1). It is in effect a brief commentary on Genesis, structured around the famous recurring phrase of the book, ‘These are the generations of ...’. This phrase originally formed a heading to various lists which have now been brought together, apart from the passages associated with the first (Gen. 2:4) and last (Gen. 37:2) occurrences of the phrase. Chronicles has sometimes combined two lists in the interests of economy, particularly where one was originally quite short (cf. v. 4a and Gen. 6:9-10; 10:1; vv. 27-28 and Gen. 11:10, 27; vv. 35 and Gen. 36:1, 9), but otherwise all the relevant passages appear in one form or another. The original lists have been stripped of all headings, summaries, and various personal details, and sometimes only the names themselves are preserved (vv. 1-42; 24-27).

This chapter has therefore become a panoramic view of God’s dealings with humanity in both creation and redemption. God’s name does not actually appear, of course, but his activity is visible everywhere to the discerning reader. The Chronicler assumes that the basic story and personalities of Genesis are known. He has also made into pivotal points names that have great significance in the early history of God’s people, especially *Adam* (v. 1), *Noah* (v. 4), *Abraham* (vv. 27, 28, 32, 34), and *Israel* (v. 34; 2:1). The sections are so arranged that the person providing the link from Adam to Israel is dealt with last in each generation. ...

Holding back the key name in this way is unique in chapters 1 – 9, and draws attention to the final name of each generation. This does not always correspond with the order of birth, for sometimes the oldest child comes first (e.g. Shem), sometimes a younger one (e.g. Isaac, Israel). The hidden scarlet cord binding all these disparate names into one seamless robe is God’s electing love, through which two emphases are brought out. First, all the nations are presented in a kind of world map, clearly placing them inside rather than outside God’s overall purposes. Secondly, and even more importantly, Israel lies at the centre of this scheme. The Israel of the Chronicler’s day was not only united with the first Israel, but belonged to the nations as a whole and was even descended from the first man.

In contrast to the genealogies of chapters 2 – 9, many lines in this chapter are traced for only a generation or so. Only the line of Israel is continued throughout. But though the discontinued lines cannot transmit God’s promises, they still have an important role in God’s sovereign purposes. Interest in the nations is a typical theme in Chronicles, and two implications follow from it here. One is that the imperial powers of the exile and later are seen as direct descendants of God’s creative activity in Adam. They are therefore still subject to his sovereign will (the Medes and the Greeks [*Madai* and *Javan*, v. 5] are mentioned explicitly, though not Babylon or Persia). The other is that the Gentiles have prospered too, whether indirectly in response to God’s command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen. 1:28) or in association with God’s covenant promises (*Ishmael*, vv. 29-31, cf. Gen. 21:13, 18; *Esau*, vv. 35-37, cf. Gen. 33:9; 36:1ff).”

i. Adam to Noah (1:-4a)

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh,

2 Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared,

3 Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah.

4 The sons of Noah:

Since it is difficult, not to say impossible, to distill any spiritual blessings from genealogical lists, like the above, we will simply copy some of the observations made in *The Tyndale Commentary*.

“The list of ten generations is extracted from Genesis 5. Adam appears only here outside Genesis. It is a bold theological statement to trace Israel’s ancestry back not just to Abraham, but to creation itself. When one considers that the Chronicler was writing at a time of great Israelite weakness, it is difficult to conceive a more magnificent association with which to begin this account. Luke traces his genealogy of Jesus to the same source (Luke 3:23-38).”

ii. The descendants of Noah (1:4b-23)

4b Shem, Ham and Japheth.

5 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras.

6 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah.

7 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim.

8 The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.

9 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

10 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on earth.

11 Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,

12 Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphthorites.

13 Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites,

14 Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,

15 Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,

16 Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

17 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech.

18 Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.

19 Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

20 Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

21 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

22 Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

23 Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary states about this list: “No notice is taken of Cain and Abel, or of any of the other sons of Adam. One line of patriarchs, from Adam to Noah, is what the historian intended to give; and to have mentioned the posterity of Cain or Abel would have been useless, as Noah was not the immediate descendant of either. Besides, all their posterity had perished in the deluge, none remaining of the Adamic family but Noah and his children; and from these all the nations of the earth sprang.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “The stride from Adam to Seth, and the genealogy’s entire obliviousness of Cain and Abel, are full of suggestion. All of these thirteen names in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint Version, though not those in the Authorized Version, are facsimiles of those which occur in Genesis 5. They are not accompanied, however, here, as they are there, by any chronological attempt. Probably the main reason of this is that any references of the kind were quite beside the objects which the compiler of this work had in view. It is, however, possible that other reasons for this chronological silence may have existed. The uncertainties attaching to the chronology found in Genesis, as regards this table, may have been suspected or evident — uncertainties which afterwards proclaim themselves so

loudly in the differences observable between the Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint versions. Thus the Hebrew text exhibits the total aggregate of years from Adam to the birth of Noah, as amounting to one thousand and fifty-six; the Samaritan version to seven hundred and seven only; and the Septuagint to as many as sixteen hundred and sixty-two; nevertheless, all three agree in adding five hundred years onward to the birth of Shem, and another hundred years to the coming of the Flood. It must be remarked of this first genealogical table, whether occurring here or in Genesis, that, notwithstanding its finished appearance, notwithstanding the impression it undoubtedly first makes on the reader, that it purports to give all the intervening generations from the first to Shem, it may not be so, nor be intended to convey that impression. It is held by some that names are omitted, and with them of course the years which belonged to them. There can be no doubt that this theory would go far to remove several great difficulties, and that some analogies might be invoked in support of it, from the important genealogies of the New Testament. The altogether abrupt opening of this book — a succession of proper names without any verb or predication — cannot be considered as even partially compensated by the first sentence of ch. 9.,

‘So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.’ This verse applies directly to the genealogies of Israel and the tribes, beginning ch. 2:1, while under any circumstances, we must look on the first portion of this book as a series of tables, here and there slightly annotated, and suddenly suspended before the eyes.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “This list, which is based closely on the Table of Nations (10:1-29), gives the descendants of Noah’s three sons, Shem (vv. 17-23), Ham (vv. 8-16), and Japheth (vv. 5-7). As is usual in this chapter, they are dealt with in reverse order, though in this case, it is the eldest who provides the continuity. The names are selective rather than comprehensive, with many lines not developed at all. It appears to cover the whole world but without going into every detail. The Japhethites were basically Israel’s northern and western neighbors ..., the Hamites include northern Africa ... and Syria/Palestine ... and the Semites, or descendants of Shem, lived in the east.

The chronicler has not included a statement about the parentage of Noah’s sons (see RSV, JB). This is almost certainly due to compression rather than carelessness, as the same thing happens twice more (vv. 17, 36), and is one indication that the author expects his readers to have some familiarity with his sources. Most EVV nevertheless supply *The sons of Noah*, with LXX.”

iii. Shem to Abraham (1:24-27)

**24 Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah,
25 Eber, Peleg, Reu,
26 Serug, Nahor, Terah
27 and Abram (that is, Abraham).**

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “After the mention of Noah’s three sons, in the order of their age (though some on slender ground think Ham the youngest), this order, as in ... Genesis 10:2, is reversed; and the compiler, beginning with Japheth, the youngest, apparently with the view of disposing of what his purpose may not so particularly require, gives the names of seven sons and seven grandsons, viz. three through Gomar, the eldest son, and four through Javan, the fourth son. These fourteen names are identical in the Authorized Version with the list of ... Genesis 10:2-4. The Septuagint, though not identical in the spelling of the four names Madai, Tiras, Tarshish, and Kittim, shows no material differences in the two places.”

The importance of Eber, the grandson of Shem is probably that the word “Hebrew” is derived from him.

The same can be said about Shem, Noah’s son through whom the promise God gave to Eve was carried. The name Shem is still alive in modern English in expressions like Semitism, or anti-Semitism. Genealogically, Shem’s importance consist in the fact that it was from his line that Abraham was born, who is considered the father of the Jewish race as well as of all believers in Jesus Christ.²

iv. Abraham (1:28-34)

28 The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael.

29 These were their descendants: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

30 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,

31 Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael.

32 The sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan.

33 The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

34 Abraham was the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel.

Although, obviously, the Chronicler’s main purpose is the pursuit of Israel’s line, he begins with Ishmael who is the least important one for his purpose. We could almost say that he wanted to get out of the way that which was less important.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The Chronicler shows greater freedom with his sources in this part of the chapter than in any other section. Neither the heading (v. 28) nor the conclusion (v. 34) is directly paralleled in Genesis, and the source for the descendants of Ishmael (vv. 29-31) has been more extensively rearranged than usual. The section on Keturah (vv. 32-33) is also distinctive. It is based on Abraham’s concubine rather than his son, it interrupts the order of the original genealogies, and it is not derived from a passage originally beginning with ‘These are the generations of ...’ All these features point to the fact that although Abraham (vv. 27, 28) is not perhaps the center of attention in these chapters, he is still worthy of special recognition. The extensive details about Esau and Edom (vv. 35-54) are probably also intended to show something of the blessing on Abraham’s wider family.”

v. Esau and Edom (1:35-54)

35 The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam and Korah.

36 The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz; by Timna: Amalek.

37 The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah.

38 The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan.

39 The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam. Timna was Lotan's sister.

40 The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah.

41 The son of Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.

42 The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

² See Gal. 3:7.

- 43 These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned: Bela son of Beor, whose city was named Dinhabah.**
- 44 When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah succeeded him as king.**
- 45 When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king.**
- 46 When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith.**
- 47 When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king.**
- 48 When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king.**
- 49 When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Acbor succeeded him as king.**
- 50 When Baal-Hanan died, Hadad succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.**
- 51 Hadad also died. The chiefs of Edom were: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,**
- 52 Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,**
- 53 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,**
- 54 Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.**

The Pulpit Commentary observes about this genealogical list: “Vers. 34-37 lead us on to the descendants of Isaac, the more important branch of Abraham’s family. It breaks again at once into two, Esau, the less important, treated of first; and Israel, reserved till we enter on ch. 2. Of Esau, the names of five sons are given; and of seven grandsons by the first in order, and four grandsons by the second in order of these sons. In ... Genesis 36:1-5 we have the names of the five sons of Esau, which correspond in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text exactly with those of this list. We have there in addition the names of their mothers respectively, who were ‘daughters of Canaan,’ Adah of the Hittites, mother of the first; Bashamath of the Ishmaelites, mother of the second (and by these two lines came the seven and four grandsons); and Aholibamah of the Hivites, mother of the remaining three sons. The names correspond also in the Septuagint in the two places, with the minute differences of Eliphaz and Ieoul here, for Eliphaz and Ieous there. Then follow the names of seven grandsons of Esau though his son Eliphaz, of whom the first five are found and in agreement (... Genesis 36:11), with the exception of Zephi here for Zepho there, both in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text. But the sixth name here, Timna, is explained in Genesis as the name of a concubine of Eliphaz, by whom he had the son Amalek, who appears here as the seventh son. There can be no doubt that we come here upon a transcriber’s error, and it would be easily amended if we read ‘and by Timna, Amalek,’ vice ‘and Timna and Amalek.’ If this be the correct account of the matter, the grandsons of Esau of course count one fewer here. These two names also tally in the Authorized Version and in the Hebrew text in the two places; while for all seven names the agreement in the Septuagint is exact, except that we read Gotham here for Gothom there. There remain, in ver. 37, four grandsons to Esau, by Reuel. Their names agree with Genesis in the Authorized Version, in the Hebrew text, and in the Septuagint, except that this last reads Naches here for Nachoth there.”

The Tyndale Commentary divides this section into three, which we will show as footnotes in this text.³ The commentary states: “Four separate lists are combined, with Esau as the common denominator. Esau’s descendants (vv. 35-37) are followed by their neighbors, the sons of Seir (vv. 38-42; cf. Gen. 36:9, 20), and by two lists of Edomite rulers, their kings (vv. 43-51a) and chiefs (vv. 51b-54). The

³ 1:25-37 – cf. Genesis 36:10-14
 1:38-42 – cf. Genesis 36:20-28
 1:43-54 – cf. Genesis 36:31-43

unexpected extent of these names is partly explained by their relationship with Abraham, but is due even more to their being parallel with the descendants of Esau's brother Israel (v. 34 and chs. 2-8). Esau had indeed multiplied, though that was as nothing to the miracle that God had worked for his brother's family.

Timna (v. 36) is another case of abbreviation. She is actually Amalek's mother (cf. v. 39; Gen. 36:12), as NIV suggests. The association of Edom (vv. 43, 51, 54) with Esau is a good example of the fluidity between individual and nation in this chapter (cf. also vv. 11-15). Hadad also died (v. 51a) is an addition to Genesis 36:40, and is probably the Chronicler's way of bringing that part of the list to a natural end.

b. The tribes of Israel (2:1 – 9:1)

i. The sons of Israel (2:1-2)

***1 These were the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,
2 Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad and Asher.***⁴

Commenting on the whole list that covers eight chapters, *The Tyndale Commentary* observes: "Judah (2:3 – 4:23) heads the tribal genealogies, and receives more extensive treatment than any other tribe. The reason for this special prominence is to be found in the central position of David's line (2:10-17; 3:1-24), which in turn arises out of the importance given to the Davidic covenant in Chronicles (1 Chr. 17, etc.). The line tracing God's purposes from Adam to Israel (ch. 1) is now narrowed down to the family of David. In other words, through this multitude of largely unknown names, the Chronicler points out that God's election purposes were still at work despite the vicissitudes of Judah's history (e.g. 2:3, 7) and the exile (e.g. 3:17-24)."

The list of Jacob's twelve sons is given in First Chronicles without any reference to details concerning Jacob's four wives who bore those children. They are presented here as one united family, which in fact they never were. The jealousy of Jacob's two wives, Lea and Rachel, which is elaborated upon in Genesis, is not mentioned. This jealousy, which brought Jacob's two concubines, Zilpah and Bilhah into the picture, by which Jacob generated four of his sons, Gad and Asher by Zilpah and Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah, is left out. What is presented here as one happy family was, in fact, a very dysfunctional one. The jealousy of the wives carried over to the sons, as is clear in the story of Joseph.

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "We know something of what we have to expect when the name of Israel, or Jacob, is announced in the first verse, with his twelve sons — those 'patriarchs,' some of whom (certainly not as many as eleven, for Reuben was absent, and, with scarcely a doubt, Benjamin), 'moved with envy, sold into Egypt Joseph,' the twelfth (... Acts 7:9). We here enter, in fact, upon the genealogies and tables and enumerations of collateral lines of 'all Israel,' to which the whole of the following seven chapters are devoted (... 1 Chronicles 9:1). This second chapter leads off with the most important line of descent of the twelve — that of Judah. And the contents of this chapter do not exhaust the one line, which, on the contrary, stretches as far as to ... 1 Chronicles 4:23. Within these limits there are just that amount of repetition (... 1 Chronicles 2:3; 4:1, etc.) and appearance of confusion which betoken the recourse of the compiler to various records and sources of information — themselves sometimes but fragmentary, and probably to mere memory and the tradition that depends upon it."

ii. The tribe of Judah (2:3 – 4:23)⁵

⁴ 2:1-2 – cf. Genesis 35:23-26

a. Judah to Hezron (2:3-8)

3 The sons of Judah: Er, Onan and Shelah. These three were born to him by a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua. Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the Lord's sight; so the Lord put him to death.

4 Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.

5 The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.

6 The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Darda—five in all.

7 The son of Carmi: Achar, who brought trouble on Israel by violating the ban on taking devoted things.

8 The son of Ethan: Azariah.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “This section, which gives the names of Judah’s five sons (vv. 3-4) and the descendants of his youngest son Zerah (vv. 6-8), is based on the only two other genealogies of Judah in the Old Testament (Gen. 46:12; Num. 26:19-22), both of which stop at *Hezron* and *Hamul* (v. 5). It highlights God’s involvement in Judah’s line in both judgment and election. The former is well illustrated by the abrupt ends of *Er*, *Onan*, and *Achar* (vv. 3, 7; cf. Gen. 38:6-10). Chronicle’s first mention of ‘the LORD’ shows God’s intolerance of sin even in a chosen tribe: ‘Er, Judah’s first-born, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he slew him’ (vv. 3, RSV = Gen. 38:6-10). It also reflects Chronicles’ special interest in the fulfilling of God’s purposes through the demotion of firstborn sons The mention of the twins *Perez and Zerah* (v. 4) hints at God’s election or choice of a particular family. The unusual circumstances of their birth (v. 4; cf. Gen. 38:11-30) and the preservation of Perez’ line signified the special workings of divine providence, through human action that might be good, bad, or indifferent. It is notable that Chronicles faithfully records God’s activity in several mixed marriages (v. 3; cf. also 2:12, 17, 34-35; 4:18).

According to 1 Kings 4:31, the last four of Zerah’s sons (*Ethan ... Darda/Dara*, v. 6) were famous wise men (‘Ezrahite,’ 1 Kgs 4:31, is probably an alternative for ‘son of Zerah’). *Carmi* (v. 7) is the son of *Zimri* (v. 6; cf. Josh. 7:1, 18), and a statement to this effect is sometimes added in EVV (e.g. NEB). ‘Sons of Carmi’ (v. 7, MT; cf. RSV, JB) is unexpected, since only one son is named. It is an example of a common problem in the genealogies, and ancient as well as modern translations vary (another example is the ‘sons of Ethan,’ v. 8). The formula ‘sons of ...’ was probably purely conventional, irrespective of the number of children listed. In this case, the son is a famous one, *viz*, ‘Achan’ (cf. Josh. 7), called here *Achar* (= ‘trouble’). This play on words is a deliberate development of Joshua 7:24-26, and places Achan in the same tradition as Ahab, also a ‘troubler of Israel’ (v. 7, NRSV, etc; cf. 1 Kgs 18:17).

Achan was also guilty of ‘unfaithfulness,’ a key term in Chronicles (Heb. *ma’al*) translated here *violating* (NIV, JB, cf. NEB) or ‘transgressed’ (RSV). The word has the nuance of depriving God of his due, and is Chronicles’ favorite explanation for the disaster of the exile. The example at the beginning of the tribal genealogies is analogous with the description of Saul at the beginning of the narrative section 10:13), and comparable instances occur at the end of both the genealogies (9:1) and the narrative (2 Chr. 36:14). Israel is clearly riddled with ‘unfaithfulness,’ from their entry into the Promised Land until their destruction by the Babylonians. The only real hope of recovery from this bad start to Israel’s genealogies lies with David, who is the leading name in the next section.”

b. The descendants of Ram (2:9-17)

⁵ 2:3b – cf. Genesis 38:7; 2:10-12 – cf. Ruth 4:19-22

9 Jerahmeel, Ram and Caleb.

10 Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, the leader of the people of Judah.

11 Nahshon was the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz,

12 Boaz the father of Obed and Obed the father of Jesse.

13 Jesse was the father of Eliab his firstborn; the second son was Abinadab, the third Shimea,

14 the fourth Nethanel, the fifth Raddai,

15 the sixth Ozem and the seventh David.

16 Their sisters were Zeruah and Abigail. Zeruah's three sons were Abishai, Joab and Asahel.

17 Abigail was the mother of Amasa, whose father was Jether the Ishmaelite.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Ram’s importance derives from his descendant *David*, who forms the climax to this section (v. 15). Verses 10-12 are based directly on Ruth 4:19-22, with the addition of the statement about *Nahshon’s* status (v. 10; cf. Num. 3:2). It is not clear why David is regarded as the seventh son here, but as the eighth in 1 Samuel 16:10-13; 17:12. David’s sisters (vv. 16-17) are described as such only here, though *Zeruah* and her three sons are well known elsewhere. The presence of an *Ishmaelite* in the family (v. 17) is another example of intermarriage (cf. v. 3), assuming this is a superior reading to 2 Samuel 17:25.”

The rather unusual feature in this genealogical list is the mention of Jesse’s three daughters and of the mother of Amasa.

c. The descendants of Caleb (2:18-24)

18 Caleb son of Hezron had children by his wife Azubah (and by Jerioth). These were her sons: Jeshur, Shobab and Ardon.

19 When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur.

20 Hur was the father of Uri, and Uri the father of Bezalel.

21 Later, Hezron lay with the daughter of Makir the father of Gilead (he had married her when he was sixty years old), and she bore him Segub.

22 Segub was the father of Jair, who controlled twenty-three towns in Gilead.

23 (But Geshur and Aram captured Havvoth Jair, as well as Kenath with its surrounding settlements — sixty towns.) All these were descendants of Makir the father of Gilead.

24 After Hezron died in Caleb Ephrathah, Abijah the wife of Hezron bore him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Caleb is a problem, on two counts. His genealogy is in several parts (2:18-24, 42-55; 4:1-8) and the name could refer to one or two persons. In practice, the otherwise unknown Caleb son of Hezron is probably distinct from Caleb, a Kenezite and son of Jephunneh, who is frequently said to have ‘followed the LORD wholeheartedly’ (e.g. Num 14:24; 32:12; Josh. 14:6, 13-14). The latter does seem to be listed separately (4:15-16), though there is some overlap in one section (2:42-50a). Mention of Bezalel (2:20), the Tent (or tabernacle) architect, also seems to support the existence of two Calebs. He was the great-grandson at least of Caleb son of Hezron but a contemporary of Caleb son of Jephunneh in the wilderness period. Jerahmeel son of Hezron, like his brother Caleb (2:9, 25, 33, 42), is otherwise unknown, apart from a brief geographical reference (1

Sam. 27:10; the ‘Negev of Caleb’ in 1 Sam. 30:14 is probably associated with the son of Jephunneh, since it is not far from the Hebron area).

The structure of Caleb’s family tree is provided by his wives and concubines. There were at least four of them, his wives *Azubah* (vv. 18-19) and *Ephrath* (2:19, 24, 50; 4:4) who was probably his father’s widow ... and his concubines *Ephah* (v. 46) and *Maacah* (v. 48). In addition, the mother of Caleb’s sons in verses 42-45 is unnamed. Jerioth (v. 18) is more likely to have been his daughter (NEB, GNB) than yet another wife (NIV, RSV).”

The Hebrew text of v. 21 reads literally: “And afterward Hezron went in to Machir the daughter of the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old; and she bare him Segub.” This could be understood to mean that he had sexual relations with her before marriage.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments on Hezron, stating that he was: “chief of that town, which, with the lands adjacent, was no doubt the property of Machir, who was so desirous of a male heir. He was grandson of Joseph. The wife of Machir was of the tribe of Manasseh (Num 26:29).”

The Tyndale Commentary states about v. 24: “Textual uncertainties here have obscured *Ashhur*’s status (cf. 4:5), but he is probably the son of Caleb and Ephrath (RSV, NEB, etc., with LXX, Vulg.) rather than of Hezron and Abijah (NIV, as MT). ‘His father’ is to be preferred to Abijah, who is otherwise unknown.”

d. The descendants of Jerahmeel (2:25-41)

25 *The sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron: Ram his firstborn, Bunah, Oren, Ozem and Ahijah.*

26 *Jerahmeel had another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam.*

27 *The sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel: Maaz, Jamin and Eker.*

28 *The sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur.*

29 *Abishur's wife was named Abihail, who bore him Ahban and Molid.*

30 *The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim. Seled died without children.*

31 *The son of Appaim: Ishi, who was the father of Sheshan. Sheshan was the father of Ahlai.*

32 *The sons of Jada, Shammai's brother: Jether and Jonathan. Jether died without children.*

33 *The sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the descendants of Jerahmeel.*

34 *Sheshan had no sons — only daughters. He had an Egyptian servant named Jarha.*

35 *Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his servant Jarha, and she bore him Attai.*

36 *Attai was the father of Nathan, Nathan the father of Zabad,*

37 *Zabad the father of Ephlal, Ephlal the father of Obed,*

38 *Obed the father of Jehu, Jehu the father of Azariah,*

39 *Azariah the father of Helez, Helez the father of Eleasah,*

40 *Eleasah the father of Sismai, Sismai the father of Shallum,*

41 *Shallum the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah the father of Elishama.*

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “This section actually comprises two lists (vv. 25-33; 34-41), as indicated by the summary at the end of verse 33 and the different style in verses 36-41 in particular. None of these names is mentioned in the rest of the Old Testament, though they are twice mentioned in passing as a group (1 Sam. 27:10; 30:29). *Ahijah* (v. 25) is probably *Jerahmeel*’s first wife (v. 26) rather than his fifth son (as AV, NIV). *Ahlai* must be *Sheshan*’s daughter, if the statements about his family are meant to be harmonized (vv. 31, 34).”

The Pulpit Commentary observes about v. 36: “The name *Zabad* throws considerable doubt on the opinion that no one of Jerahmeel’s descendants given in this genealogy can be found elsewhere in the Old Testament; for compare again ... 1 Chronicles 11:41.”

And about Azariah, the commentary states: “So also compare *Azariah* with ... 2 Chronicles 23:1. These two names are abundantly interesting here. Zabad, the tenth from Jerahmeel, or fourteenth from the patriarch Judah himself, brings us to the time of David, by exactly the same interval as seven other perfect genealogies, four of these having the very same number of steps, viz. fourteen, two having fifteen, and that of David himself having eleven steps. An analogous and equally interesting correspondence can be traced with the name Azariah.”

e. Further descendants of Caleb (2:42-55)

42 The sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel: Mesha his firstborn, who was the father of Ziph, and his son Mareshah, who was the father of Hebron.

43 The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem and Shema.

44 Shema was the father of Raham, and Raham the father of Jorkeam. Rekem was the father of Shammai.

45 The son of Shammai was Maon, and Maon was the father of Beth Zur.

46 Caleb's concubine Ephah was the mother of Haran, Moza and Gazez. Haran was the father of Gazez.

47 The sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah and Shaaph.

48 Caleb's concubine Maacah was the mother of Sheber and Tirhanah.

49 She also gave birth to Shaaph the father of Madmannah and to Sheva the father of Macbenah and Gibeon. Caleb's daughter was Acsah.

50 These were the descendants of Caleb. The sons of Hur the firstborn of Ephrathah: Shobal the father of Kiriath Jearim,

51 Salma the father of Bethlehem, and Hareph the father of Beth Gader.

52 The descendants of Shobal the father of Kiriath Jearim were: Haroeh, half the Manahathites,

53 and the clans of Kiriath Jearim: the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites and Mishraites. From these descended the Zorathites and Eshtaiolites.

54 The descendants of Salma: Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth Beth Joab, half the Manahathites, the Zorites,

55 and the clans of scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, Shimeathites and Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Recab.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “This section continues 2:18-24. It contains at least two lists (vv. 42-50a, 50b-55), separated by the conclusion and heading in verse 50. Many names are unique, but those that can be identified contain a mixture of personal and geographical details. Several in verses 42a-50, for instance, are in the *Hebron* area (e.g. *Ziph*, *Mareshah*, v. 42; *Beth Zur*, v. 45), although those in verses 50b-55 seem to be scattered all over Judah. Beth Zur was on Judah’s southern boundary after the exile, and since there are some more southerly names, this particular list is probably pre-exilic. *Hebron* (vv. 42-43) and Caleb’s daughter *Acsah* (v. 49) are associated with Caleb son of Jephunneh, suggesting that the tradition of the two Calebs have become interwoven in verses 42-50a, *Mareshah* (v. 42) might be *Mesha*’s grandson (GNB, JB) or his brother (NEB ...), or possibly Caleb’s only son (RSV, cf. LXX). *Haroeh* (v.52 = ‘the seer’) is sometimes equated with Reaiah (4:2). *The clans of scribes* (v. 55) is a possible but not a secure translation. They may be comparable with the guilds of 4:14, 21, 23,

but others regard it as a gentile expression, either ‘Sophrates’ (NEB, JB) or Siphrites, i.e. from Kiriath Sepher.”

f. The royal family of David (3:1-24)

- 1 These were the sons of David born to him in Hebron: The firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; the second, Daniel the son of Abigail of Carmel;**
2 the third, Absalom the son of Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith;
3 the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream, by his wife Eglah.
4 These six were born to David in Hebron, where he reigned seven years and six months. David reigned in Jerusalem thirty-three years,
5 and these were the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon. These four were by Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel.
6 There were also Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet,
7 Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,
8 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet — nine in all.
9 All these were the sons of David, besides his sons by his concubines. And Tamar was their sister.
10 Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son,
11 Jehoram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son,
12 Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son,
13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son,
14 Amon his son, Josiah his son.
15 The sons of Josiah: Johanan the firstborn, Jehoiakim the second son, Zedekiah the third, Shallum the fourth.
16 The successors of Jehoiakim: Jehoiachin his son, and Zedekiah.
17 The descendants of Jehoiachin the captive: Shealtiel his son,
18 Malkiram, Pedaiiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah.
19 The sons of Pedaiiah: Zerubbabel and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah. Shelomith was their sister.
20 There were also five others: Hashubah, Ohel, Berekiah, Hasadiah and Jushab — Hessed.
21 The descendants of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah, and the sons of Rephaiah, of Arnan, of Obadiah and of Shecaniah.
22 The descendants of Shecaniah: Shemaiah and his sons: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah and Shaphat — six in all.
23 The sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah and Azrikam — three in all.
24 The sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah and Anani — seven in all.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The Davidic line is the centerpiece of Judah’s genealogy. It continues 2:10-17 and contains three distinct stages: David’s own children (vv. 1-9), the kings of Israel (vv. 10-16), and the post-exilic generations (vv. 17-24). The last section is the only part of Chronicles to continue for several generations after the exile, and presumably reaches down, or nearly so, to the Chronicler’s own time, though textual problems in verse 21 unfortunately make it impossible to be certain of actual dates. Interest centers on the family line as a whole rather than on any individual. Though the Chronicler clearly believed that God’s promise to David (especially 1 Chr. 17:10b-14)

remained effective in his own day, he did not identify any individual who might restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus' own genealogies trace David's line through different sons of Zerubbabel, neither of whom is listed in verses 19-20 (cf. Matt. 1:13; Luke 3:27).

1-8. The list of David's children has a few variants compared with 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:14-16. *Daniel* (v. 5:1) appears for 'Chileab,' and *Eliphelet* (v. 6) and *Nogah* (v. 7) are additional, though the total *nine* (7) suggests their inclusion is no accident. *Bathshua* (v. 6; NIV fn.) is probably an alternative pronunciation for *Bathsheba*, perhaps influenced by 2:3, though *Solomon* is described unexpectedly as her fourth son (cf. 2 Sam. 12:24-25).

10-16. The list of kings is a very mixed bag, and in comparison with the dynastic changes in the northern kingdom, it is a miracle that the line was preserved at all. All the Davidic kings are here, and only Athaliah, Ahab's daughter (cf. 2 Kgs. 11), is missing. King's spelling of *Azariah* is used (v. 12; cf. 2 Kgs. 15:1-7), though he appears in 2 Chronicles 26 as *Uzziah* (also 2 Kgs 15:13, 30; Isa. 1:1; 6:1; etc.). Of Josiah's sons (v. 15), *Johanan* is not mentioned in Kings and may have died young, and *Shallum*, the throne name of Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:31-34 = 2 Chr. 36:2-4; cf. Jer. 22:11), is described here as the youngest of the four brothers, even though he reigned before *Jehoiakim* (2 Kgs 23:35 – 24:7 = 2 Chr. 36:5-8) and *Zedekiah* (2 Kgs 24:17 – 25:7 = 2 Chr. 36:11-14). The information here cannot be reconciled with what is said about their ages in 2 Kings 23:31, 36; 24:18, and it is easiest to assume some scribal error in connection with the numbers.

The name of *Jehoiachin* (NIV, GNB; 'Jeconiah,' MT and other EVV; also v. 16) the penultimate king of Judah whose release from prison raised hopes of a restoration of the Davidic monarchy (cf. 2 Kgs 25:27-30), introduces the final stage of the dynasty.

17-24. *Jehoiachin*'s description, *the captive* (v. 17; AV, 'Assir'), involves a very minor change in MT. He is mentioned with five of his children (cf. vv. 17-18) in Babylonian texts of the exile as receiving regular food rations. An inscription also mentions the name *Shelomith* (v. 19). She was either a high-ranking official in Judah or the wife of such a person, and was quite possibly the same person as in Chronicles' list.

Of the several textual problems in this passage, two are worthy of special mention. *Zerubbabel*'s father is called *Pedaiah* here (5:19) but *Shealtiel* (v. 18) elsewhere (Ezra 3:2; Hag. 1:1; Matt. 1:12 etc.). *Pedaiah* may have been his real father, with fatherhood perhaps attributed to *Shealtiel* through a levirate marriage, or perhaps he was really *Shealtiel*'s son but *Pedaiah* then became the head of the family after the former's early death. The real crux, however, concerns the number of generations underlying verse 21. There are two main possibilities; either the six names from *Pelaliah* to *Shecaniah* are more or less contemporaries, or five successive generations are represented by *Jeshiah* to *Shecaniah* (Neh. 3:29) and *Hattush* (Ezra 8:2) approximately 65 to 75 years after *Zerubbabel*, who would therefore precede *Shecaniah* by two generations. Although the names are common and the overall chronology of *Ezra* is disputed, this is preferable to regarding *Shecaniah* as the seventh generation from *Zerubbabel*. *Elioenai*'s sons (v. 24) are otherwise unknown and their names seem totally forgettable to most modern readers. But for *Chronicles* they are the corporate incarnation of a living hope also exemplified in the names of *Zerubbabel*'s sons (v. 20) – *Hashubah* (= 'Yahweh blesses'), *Ohel* (= '[God's] tent'), *Berekiah* (= 'Yahweh blesses'), *Hasadiah* (= 'Yahweh is love'), and *Jushab-Hesed* (= 'May love be restored').

g. Further clans of Judah (4:1-23)

1 *The descendants of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal.*

2 *Reaiah son of Shobal was the father of Jahath, and Jahath the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the clans of the Zorathites.*

- 3** *These were the sons of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma and Idbash. Their sister was named Hazzelelponi.*
- 4** *Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the descendants of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah and father of Bethlehem.*
- 5** *Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.*
- 6** *Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni and Haahashtari. These were the descendants of Naarah.*
- 7** *The sons of Helah: Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan,*
- 8** *and Koz, who was the father of Anub and Hazzobebah and of the clans of Aharhel son of Harum.*
- 9** *Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain."*
- 10** *Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.*
- 11** *Kelub, Shuhah's brother, was the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton.*
- 12** *Eshton was the father of Beth Rapha, Paseah and Tehinnah the father of Ir Nahash. These were the men of Recah.*
- 13** *The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.*
- 14** *Meonothai was the father of Ophrah. Seraiah was the father of Joab, the father of Ge Harashim. It was called this because its people were craftsmen.*
- 15** *The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah and Naam. The son of Elah: Kenaz.*
- 16** *The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria and Asarel.*
- 17** *The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Epher and Jalon. One of Mered's wives gave birth to Miriam, Shammai and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa.*
- 18** *(His Judean wife gave birth to Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.) These were the children of Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah, whom Mered had married.*
- 19** *The sons of Hodiah's wife, the sister of Naham: the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.*
- 20** *The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-Hanan and Tilon. The descendants of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth.*
- 21** *The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah and the clans of the linen workers at Beth Ashbea,*
- 22** *Jokim, the men of Cozeba, and Joash and Saraph, who ruled in Moab and Jashubi Lehem. (These records are from ancient times.)*
- 23** *They were the potters who lived at Netaim and Gederah; they stayed there and worked for the king.*

Since there is little, if any in these verses that can be used for devotional purposes, with the exception of the prayer of Jabez, we have little choice but to resort to copying the comments of *The Tyndale Commentary*. So, here they are: "Several short genealogies are now listed, none of which has any parallel in the rest of the Old Testament. Some clearly supplement the information about the families of Perez (vv. 1-8) and Shelah (vv. 21-23), while other probably describe some of the smaller clans. Six sections can be discerned, viz. the clans of (a) Hur (vv. 1-4; cf. 2:19-20, 50b-55) and Ashhur (vv. 5-8; cf. 2:24), who were sons of Caleb and Ephrath and descendants of Perez (v. 1, cf. 2:4-5); (b) Jabez (vv. 9-10); (c) Kelub (vv. 11-12); (d) Othniel and Caleb, the Kenizzites (vv. 13-16); (e) other

lesser-known groups (vv. 17-20); and (f) *Shelah*, son of Judah (vv. 21-23; cf. 2:3). By finishing with the first of Judah's sons to produce children, a sense of completeness is given to the list.

Most interest centers on a series of short notes. For example, the formula, 'father of + place name' occurs several times (vv. 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21), showing interest in various localities Other notes provide important and rare information about pre-exile craft guilds, such as *linen workers* (v. 21) and *potters* (v. 23; cf. also v. 14 and 2:55), and details of other mixed marriages (vv. 17-18; cf. 2:3, 17, 34-35). The most fascinating note concerns the otherwise unknown *Jabez* and his effective *prayer* (vv. 9-10; there is no obvious connection with the place name in 2:55). Two of his four requests are about his physical circumstance (for enlarged *territory* and for freedom from *pain* – his name sounds like the Heb. for 'pain') and two about his relationship with God (*blessing* and God's protective *hand*). The point is not simply that he prayed, but that *God granted his request*. Chronicles' inclusion of other answered prayers of a similar nature (e.g. for increased land, cf. 1 Chr. 5:20-22; 2 Chr. 20:6-12; for physical healing, cf. 2 Chr. 32:24) is a reminder that God still hears and answers specific prayers."

The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson, published in 2000 became an instant bestseller.

The Hebrew text of Jabez' prayer in v. 10 reads literally: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him what he requested."

V. 9 states that Jabez was "more honorable than his brothers." The Hebrew word rendered "honorable" is *nikbaad*, which literally means "to be heavy." It can have a very positive or negative meaning. In the context of Jabez' prayer, it is of course positive. In the Jewish mind glory was something "heavy." We notice this in Paul's statement in his epistle to the Corinthians: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."⁶

The Matthew Henry's Commentary has the most elaborate comment on these verses, which is worth copying. "One reason, no doubt, why Ezra is here most particular in the register of the tribe of Judah is because it was that tribe which, with its appendages, Simeon, Benjamin, and Levi, made up the kingdom of Judah, which not only long survived the other tribes in Canaan, but in process of time, now when this was written, returned out of captivity, when the generality of the other tribes were lost in the kingdom of Assyria. The most remarkable person in this paragraph is Jabez. It is not said whose son he was, nor does it appear in what age he lived; but, it should seem, he was the founder of one of the families of Aharhel, mentioned v. 8. Here is,

I. The reason of his name: his mother gave him the name with this reason, Because I bore him with sorrow, v. 9. All children are born with sorrow (for the sentence upon the woman is, In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children), but some with much more sorrow than others. Usually the sorrow in bearing is afterwards forgotten for joy that the child is born; but here it seems it was so extraordinary that it was remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived. Perhaps the mother called Habez, as Rachel called her son Benoni, when she was dying of the sorrow. Or, if she recovered it, yet thus she recorded it, 1. That it might be a continual memorandum to herself, to be thankful to God as long as she lived for supporting her under and bringing her through that sorrow. It may be of use to be often reminded of our sorrows, that we may always have such thoughts of things as we had in the day of our affliction, and may learn to rejoice with trembling. 2. That it might likewise be a memorandum to him what this world is into which she bore him, a vale of

⁶ II Cor. 4:17 (NKJV)

tears, in which he must expect few days and full of trouble. The sorrow he carried in his name might help to put a seriousness upon his spirit. It might also remind him to love and honor his mother, and labor, in every thing, to be a comfort to her who brought him into the world with so much sorrow. It is piety in children thus to requite their parents, 1 Tim 5:4.

II. The eminence of his character: He was more honorable than his brethren, qualified above them by the divine grace and dignified above them by the divine providence; they did virtuously, but he excelled them all. Now the sorrow with which his mother bore him was abundantly recompensed. That son which of all her children cost her most dear she was most happy in, and was made glad in proportion to the affliction, Ps 90:15. We are not told upon what account he was more honorable than his brethren, whether because he raised a greater estate, or was preferred to the magistracy, or signalized himself in war; we have most reason to think it was upon the account of his learning and piety, not only because these, above anything, put honor upon a man, but because we have reason to think that in these Jabez was eminent. 1. In learning, because we find that the families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez (ch. 2:55), a city which, it is likely, took its name from him. The Jews say that he was a famous doctor of the law and left many disciples behind him. And it should seem, by the mentioning of him so abruptly here, that his name was well known when Ezra wrote this. 2. In piety, because we find here that he was a praying man. His inclination to devotion made him truly honorable, and by prayer he obtained those blessings from God which added much to his honor. The way to be truly great is to be truly good and to pray much.

III. The prayer he made, probably like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, just when he was setting out in the world. He set himself to acknowledge God in all his ways, put himself under the divine blessing and protection, and prospered accordingly. Perhaps these were the heads on which he enlarged in his daily prayers; for this purpose it was his constant practice to pray alone, and with his family, as Daniel. Some think that it was upon some particular occasion, when he was straitened and threatened by his enemies, that he prayed this prayer. Observe,

1. To whom he prayed, not to any of the gods of the Gentiles; no, he called on the God of Israel, the living and true God, who alone can hear and answer prayer, and in prayer had an eye to him as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, the God with whom Jacob wrestled and prevailed and was thence called Israel.

2. What was the nature of his prayer? (1.) As the margin reads it, it was a solemn vow—If thou wilt bless me indeed, &c. and then the sense is imperfect, but may easily be filled up from Jacob's vow, or some such like—then thou shalt be my God. He did not express his promise, but left it to be understood, either because he was afraid to promise in his own strength or because he resolved to devote himself entirely to God. He does, as it were, give God a blank paper, let him write what he pleases: 'Lord, if thou wilt bless me and keep me, do what thou wilt with me, I will be at thy command and disposal for ever.' (2.) As the text reads it, it was the language of a most ardent and affectionate desire: O that thou wouldst bless me!

3. What was the matter of his prayer? Four things he prayed for:—(1.) That God would bless him indeed: 'That, blessing, thou wilt bless me, bless me greatly with manifold and abundant blessings.' Perhaps he had an eye to the promise God made to Abraham (Gen 22:17), In blessing, I will bless thee. 'Let that blessing of Abraham come upon me.' Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, and those are blessed indeed who are blessed with them. God's blessings are real things and produce real effects. We can but wish a blessing: he commands it. Those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. (2.) That he would enlarge his coast, that he would prosper his endeavors for the increase of what fell to his lot either by work or war. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer. (3.) That God's hand might be with him. The prayer

of Moses for this tribe of Judah was, That his own hands might be sufficient for him, Deut 33:7; but Jabez expects not that this can be the case, unless he have God's hand with him and the presence of his power. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all-sufficient. (4.) That he would keep him from evil, the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt him, nor grieve him, nor make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrow: in the original there is an allusion to his name. Father in heaven, deliver me from evil.

4. What was the success of his prayer: God granted him that which he requested, prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites, and so he became more honorable than his brethren. God was of old always ready to hear prayer, and his ear is not yet heavy."

The Tyndale Commentary comments on the words in v. 22: "Who ruled in Moab (NIV, RSV) might be translated, 'who went to Moab to take wives' (JB, cf. Tg.), or better, 'who worked for Moab,' continuing the occupational theme of verses 21-23."

iii. The tribe of Simeon (4:24-43)

24 The descendants of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah and Shaul;

25 Shallum was Shaul's son, Mibsam his son and Mishma his son.

26 The descendants of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son and Shimei his son.

27 Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but his brothers did not have many children; so their entire clan did not become as numerous as the people of Judah.

28 They lived in Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual,

29 Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad,

30 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,

31 Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri and Shaaraim. These were their towns until the reign of David.

32 Their surrounding villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Token and Ashan — five towns —

33 and all the villages around these towns as far as Baalath. These were their settlements. And they kept a genealogical record.

34 Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah,

35 Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel,

36 also Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah,

37 and Ziza son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah.

38 The men listed above by name were leaders of their clans. Their families increased greatly,

39 and they went to the outskirts of Gedor to the east of the valley in search of pasture for their flocks.

40 They found rich, good pasture, and the land was spacious, peaceful and quiet. Some Hamites had lived there formerly.

41 The men whose names were listed came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. They attacked the Hamites in their dwellings and also the Meunites who were there and completely destroyed them, as is evident to this day. Then they settled in their place, because there was pasture for their flocks.

42 And five hundred of these Simeonites, led by Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi, invaded the hill country of Seir.

43 They killed the remaining Amalekites who had escaped, and they have lived there to this day.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The sections 4:24 – 5:26 and part of chapter 7 are Chronicles’ only detailed treatment of the tribes of the old northern kingdom of Israel. They offer a vignette of Israel’s history from conquest (4:38-43; 5:8-10, 16) to exile (5:25-26). The Chronicler’s influence is visible in the design of these passages and in the appearance of his favorite themes. The section 5:20-22 in particular betrays the Chronicler’s special contribution, emphasizing the value of *trust* and *prayer*, and that *the battle was God’s*. He is also responsible for the important paragraph (5:1-2) which explains why Reuben does not head the tribal lists. The Promised Land receives more emphasis here than anywhere else in chapters 1-9. Prominence is given to the ways in which individual tribes increased their inheritance (4:28-31, 39-43; 5:9-10, 16, 22, 23; cf. also 4:10), such as the extension of Israel’s traditional northern limit of Dan (1 Chr. 21:2; 2 Chr. 30:5) to *Mount Hermon* (5:25) not far from Damascus. It is also stressed three times, however (5:6, 22, 26), that these tribes went into *exile* because they *were unfaithful* to God (5:25).

A variety of sources are employed, as usual. The beginnings of both the Simeonite and Reubenite lists make use of the two other main Old Testament tribal genealogies (Gen. 46; Num. 26; cf. also Exod. 6:14ff.). It is also quite likely that use has been made both of military census lists (5:18, 24) and of local tribal records dealing with pasture-lands, border conflicts, etc. (e.g. 4:34-43; 5:7-10, 16). Other sources (e.g. 5:4-6, 11-15) remain unidentified.

The tribes of Simeon, whose territory lay on Judah’s southern edge, is placed here because of its close association with its larger neighbor. The list of places in verses 28-33 (based on Josh. 19:2-8; cf. Josh. 15:28-32) was regarded as Judean from very early times, and by David’s time the takeover was complete (cf. v. 33). Nevertheless, some clans retained a separate identity until at least the late eighth century (*the days of Hezekiah*, v. 41). Chronicles may have preserved this memory of Simeon’s independence either because of its example of geographical expansion or because post-exile Jews still lived in the area (cf. Neh. 11:26-29).”

The Pulpit Commentary comments on vv. 24-27: “The second of the twelve tribes is now taken, and occupies but small space as compared with Judah preceding, or Levi and Benjamin when their turn comes. The comparison of the enumeration of the sons of Simeon here with that in ... Genesis 46:10, ... Exodus 6:15, is helpful in detaching the idea that the compiler of Chronicles copied direct from Genesis and Exodus, or that he depended exclusively on identical sources of information. That comparison shows six names in both of those passages for only five here, and it shows also difference in three of the names, viz. Jemuel, Zohar, and Jachin, for Nemuel, Zeta, and Jarib. On the other hand, the list of ... Numbers 26:12 is in exact agreement with our list here (the omission of Ohad in both being sufficiently accounted for by one and the same reason), with the exception of Jarib here for Jachin still there; and this solitary difference may justly be suspected to be nothing but an early corruption of *resh* for *caph* and *beth* for *nun* Ver. 25 contains three descents from one of these — Shaul. Of Shallum, the first, it may be noted that there are fourteen others of the same name in the Old Testament; and of Mibsam and Mishma (whom some call brothers, surely in error), that there were others of the same name (and certainly given as brothers), viz. the sons of Ishmael (... Genesis 25:13; ch. 1:29). Ver. 26 adds apparently another three descents, viz. from Mishma. Of the first-named of these, Hammuel, it may be noted that the name appears in many Hebrew manuscripts as *Chammuel*; of the second-named, Zacchur, that six others of the same name (though the Authorized Version gives them Zaccur) are found in Numbers, the First Book of Chronicles, and Nehemiah; while on the third, Shimei (of which name the Old Testament contains fifteen others), our attention is especially detained as father of sixteen sons and six daughters, though it is observed that his brethren (query *Hammuel* and *Zacchur*) had not large families. The smallness of the whole tribe relatively to Judah, was only saved from being smaller by

him. With this agrees the census of ... Numbers 1:23, 27; 2:4, 13; 26:14. It is possible that this Shimei is the same with Shemaiah of ver. 37.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes about vv. 25-27: “*Shaul’s* line is the only one continued for several generations. It may have been the largest clan in the tribe or its Canaanite ancestry was perhaps of special interest (cf. Gen. 46:10; Exod. 6:15).”

About vv. 34:43, the commentary states: “The list of clan leaders (vv. 34-38) relates to the dual expansions to the west (vv. 39-41) and the south-east (vv. 42-43). Westward, their destination was the area of either *Gedor* (v. 39, NIV, RSV, NEB), possibly the same as Geder (Josh. 12:13), or ‘Gerar’ (GNB, JB, cf. LXX), the well-known town midway between Gaza and Beersheba. The description of the *land* uses familiar post-exile language (cf. Neh. 9:25, 35), but it is also reminiscent of the conquest (cf. e.g. Exod. 3:8), as in the statement that they *completely destroyed* them (v. 41, NIV; cf. JB, ‘put them under a ban’). Everything associated with idolatrous worship, including the defeated population, had to be destroyed, but the Israelites would gain nothing for themselves (cf. Deut. 7:2; 20:17). The *Hamites* (vv. 40-41), are presumably one of the Philistines or Canaanite peoples of 1:11-16, though such a wide-ranging term is unexpected. The Meunites (v. 41), associated in the Old Testament with the Philistines (2 Chr. 26:7) and with Mount Seir (2 Chr. 20:1, 10, 22), may be located in the southern Negev. Mount Seir (v. 43, RSV) could also be in the same area, though its traditional association with Edom would place it somewhere to the south and/or east of the Dead Sea. The *Amalekites* (v. 43) were a nomadic group in the Negev and Sinai area, who were defeated by both Saul (1 Sam. 15:7-8) and David (1 Sam. 30:1-18; 2 Sam. 8:12 = 1 Chr. 18:11).”

iv. The Transjordanian Tribes (5:1-26)

a. The tribe of Reuben (5:1-10)

1 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel; so he could not be listed in the genealogical record in accordance with his birthright,
2 and though Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him, the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph)—
3 the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.
4 The descendants of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son,
5 Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son,
6 and Beerah his son, whom Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria took into exile. Beerah was a leader of the Reubenites.
7 Their relatives by clans, listed according to their genealogical records: Jeiel the chief, Zechariah,
8 and Bela son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel. They settled in the area from Aroer to Nebo and Baal Meon.
9 To the east they occupied the land up to the edge of the desert that extends to the Euphrates River, because their livestock had increased in Gilead.
10 During Saul's reign they waged war against the Hagrites, who were defeated at their hands; they occupied the dwellings of the Hagrites throughout the entire region east of Gilead.

Barnes' Notes comments on Reuben’s failure to receive the birthright as the oldest of Jacob’s sons: “In particular, the right of the first-born to a double inheritance (Deut 21:17) was conferred on Joseph, both by the expressed will of Jacob (Gen 48:22) and in the actual partition of Canaan (Josh 16-

17). But though the birthright, as respecting its material privileges, passed to Joseph, its other rights, those of dignity and pre-eminence, fell to Judah; of whom came the chief ruler, an allusion especially to David, though it may reach further, and include a glance at the Messiah, the true ‘Ruler’ of Israel (Mic 5:2).”

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the first 2 verses: “The Transjordanian tribes are listed next, *viz.* Reuben (vv. 1-10), Gad (vv. 11-17), and the half tribe of Manasseh (vv. 23-24).

A special note explains why *Reuben* did not head the list of tribes, although *he was the firstborn* (v. 1; cf. Gen. 29:31-32). Inheritance customs in the ancient Near East were strictly observed, and a birthright was forfeited only for serious offences against one’s parents. Reuben’s crime was certainly serious, since going to *bed* with his father’s concubine (cf. Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4) was in effect a claim to his father’s property (cf. 2 Sam. 16:20-22; 1 Kgs 2:13-25). Personal details are less important, however, than the consequences for the tribes. Chronicles has interpreted Genesis 48:5 in the light of a law giving a double share to the firstborn (Deut. 21:15-17), by assuming that the status of Ephraim and Manasseh as Jacob’s full sons was equivalent to their father’s double share (*the sons of Joseph*, v. 1). Strictly speaking, this goes beyond Genesis 48, which mentions adoption and the transfer of the firstborn’s blessing (cf. v. 2, LXX), but it is perfectly reasonable in view of the widespread practice of the firstborn’s double share. In this way, Chronicles underlines that the northern tribes had not lost their ancient privileges (cf. 2 Chr. 28:5-15; 30:1-12), which is hardly a sign of an anti-Samaritan bias! *Judah* therefore attained a leading position, as the *strongest* tribe from whom descended a *ruler* (NIV, NEB, GNB) or ‘prince’ (RSV, JB), i.e. David (cf. Gen. 49:8-10). This seems to be the reason Judah is placed first in the genealogy. Chronicles’ special interest in the demotion of the firstborn sons (cf. also 1 Chr. 2:3; 26:10) may be intended to emphasize that status before God was a matter of privilege rather than right. The same principle was also applicable to Israel as God’s firstborn son (cf. Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9).”

The same commentary continues its comments on vv. 3-10: “The Reubenites’ history is divided into at least three periods (vv. 3-6, 7-9, 10). *Beerah* (v. 6) seems to represent the end of the tribe’s existence when they were exiled by Tiglathpileser III (*Tiglath-pileser*, here and 2 Chr. 28:20), probably in 733 BC. The whole area of Israelite Transjordan became the Assyrian province of Gal’azu, i.e. Gilead (= ‘the land beyond the Jordan,’ Isa 9:1, RSV; see also 2 Kgs 15:29). Verses 7-10 describe Reubenite expansion in earlier times. *Aroer, Nebo, and Baal-meon* (v. 8) were recaptured from Ahab by Mesha king of Moab in the second half of the ninth century BC (cf. Num. 32:3, 38; Josh. 13:16-17). The *Hagrites* (v. 1-10, cf. vv. 19-21), who were defeated in Saul’s time in the eleventh century BC, were associated both with the Arabs (cf. Hagar) and the Moabites (Ps. 83:6).”

The Pulpit Commentary comments on vv. 1 and 2 of this chapter: “The tribe of Reuben is now taken third in order by the compiler, though Reuben was the first of all the sons of Israel. The distinct statements of vers. 1 and 2, respecting the degradation of Reuben and his loss of the rights of primogeniture, are not to be understood, however, as mentioned in any way to account for his standing third here. That Judah takes in any genealogy the first place needs no other apology than that contained in this passage, ‘Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler’ (*i.e.* David, and in him ‘David’s greater Son and Lord’). And that Simeon is taken immediately after Judah was natural enough, both because the second place belonged to him, and because his tribe, in journeying, in settlement, and in acknowledged friendship, was so nearly related to that of Judah. It is as an important historical fact, a lesson and stern memento of crime, that the tale of Reuben is here as elsewhere told. Indeed, in the remarkably exalting language applied to Reuben (... Genesis 49:3) by the dying father in those ‘blessings’ of his sons which were so marvelously living with prophecy, that ‘blessing’ ... weighted with hard reality, and may really carry this meaning: ‘O Reuben I *though* thou *art* my firstborn, *though* my might and the beginning of my strength, *though* the excellency of dignity and the

excellency of power,' *yet*, because of thy boiling lust (... Genesis 35:22) 'thou shall not excel.' In that endowing charter of the patriarch's deathbed, the birthright of Reuben is not in so many words given to Joseph and his sons, but what is given to Joseph is so abundant above the lot of all the others, that we find no difficulty in accepting the formal statement of the fact here first found in this passage. The large measure of promise meted to Judah (... Genesis 49:8-12) rests, no doubt, upon the title already referred to. There would seem to be also a righteous moral reason in Joseph after all becoming heir to the birthright, inasmuch as he was the eldest child of her who was Israel's real love, and who, but for deception and sharp practice, would have been his first wife. How he remembered her, and with what determined practical consequence, the affecting passage ... Genesis 48:1-7, 16, 21, 22, sufficiently reveals; yet comp. ... Deuteronomy 21:15- 17. The meaning of the last clause of ver. 1 is evidently that, though thus Reuben was the natural firstborn, and Joseph had really the birthright, the registration did not proceed in this instance (probably partly for the very reason of the ambiguity) by the order of birthright, but everything yielded to the special call for precedence on the part of Judah (ver. 2)."

b. The tribe of Gad (5:11-22)

11 The Gadites lived next to them in Bashan, as far as Salecah:

12 Joel was the chief, Shapham the second, then Janai and Shaphat, in Bashan.

13 Their relatives, by families, were: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia and Eber — seven in all.

14 These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz.

15 Ahi son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, was head of their family.

16 The Gadites lived in Gilead, in Bashan and its outlying villages, and on all the pasturelands of Sharon as far as they extended.

17 All these were entered in the genealogical records during the reigns of Jotham king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel.

18 The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had 44,760 men ready for military service — able-bodied men who could handle shield and sword, who could use a bow, and who were trained for battle.

19 They waged war against the Hagarites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab.

20 They were helped in fighting them, and God handed the Hagarites and all their allies over to them, because they cried out to him during the battle. He answered their prayers, because they trusted in him.

21 They seized the livestock of the Hagarites — fifty thousand camels, two hundred fifty thousand sheep and two thousand donkeys. They also took one hundred thousand people captive,

22 and many others fell slain, because the battle was God's. And they occupied the land until the exile.

The Tyndale Commentary comments on the list of Gad and his descendants: "For the Gadites (vv. 11-17) and the half tribe of Manasseh (vv. 23-24; cf. 4:24; 5:3), Chronicles has dispensed with the usual introductory material from Genesis 46 and Numbers 26 and continued with the same sources as for Simeon and Reuben.

The Gadites' territory (vv. 11, 16) was in *Bashan*, an area renowned for its fertility and whose eastern border extended to *Salecah* (v. 11; cf. Deut. 3:10; Josh. 13:11). *Sharon* (v. 16) is not the well-known coastal plain, but a place mentioned on the Moabite Stone (line 13). The chronological data (v.

17) surprisingly include *Jotham king of Judah* as well as *Jeroboam II* of Israel. This could be explained by the compiling of separate records for each kingdom, or by an Israelite event being synchronized with a Davidic king, or it could be derived from a synchronistic chronicle written in two columns.

[18-21] These verses are a summary dealing with expansion and conquest by the two-and-a-half tribes. Though no date is given for the number of *trained* soldiers (v. 18), the figures may refer to the conflict with the *Hagrites* (vv. 19-21; cf. v. 10). The tribes' opponents were Arab groups (v. 19; cf. Gen. 25:15; *Jetur* = Iturea, Luke 31:1). However, the paragraph's primary concern is to explain why the tribes were successful, underlining the spiritual reasons as much as the military ones. These are summarized in a phrase typical of Chronicles, *the battle was God's* (v. 22, NIV cf. 2 Chr. 20:15; 25:8; 32:8). The three supporting ideas in verse 20 are found throughout Chronicles: (God's) *help* (cf. 1 Chr. 12:19; 15:26; 2 Chr. 25:8; 32:8), answered *prayer* in battle (cf. 2 Chr. 14:11-15; 20:5-30; 32:20-21) and *trust* in God (cf. 2 Chr. 32:10). The causes of the *exile*, however, were a different matter altogether (cf. vv. 6, 25-26)."

c. The half tribe of Manasseh (5:23-26)

23 *The people of the half-tribe of Manasseh were numerous; they settled in the land from Bashan to Baal Hermon, that is, to Senir (Mount Hermon).*

24 *These were the heads of their families: Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah and Jahdiel. They were brave warriors, famous men, and heads of their families.*

25 *But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.*

26 *So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria (that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria), who took the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh into exile. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara and the river of Gozan, where they are to this day.*

The Pulpit Commentary states about Bashan, Baal Hermon and Senir: "These three names need scarcely be read as different names for exactly the same region, but as designating different sides or heights of what was essentially one and the same well-known mountain district, with which would agree Psalm 43:6, 'Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' So ... Deuteronomy 3:8-10 tells us that Hermon was called *Sirion* by the Sidonians; Shenir, *i.q.* *Senir*... exactly the same word in the Hebrew text in all the four places of its occurrence — Song of Solomon 4:8; ... Ezekiel 27:5), by the Amorites. And the suggestion of [one Bible scholar] is likely enough, that *Baal-hermon* was the Phoenician cast of the name. If any point were to be gained by reading the names, however, as intended to cover exactly the same tract, it may be noted (1) that the Hebrew conjunction will perfectly admit of being translated "even;" and (2) that the *order* of the names, going from the foreign to the native *Hermon* itself, would so far favor it."

The Tyndale Commentary observes about vv. 23 and 24: "Brief geographical and genealogical details are given for the eastern part of Manasseh. They lived between the boundary with Gad (*Bashan*, cf. v. 11) and *Mount Hermon* or *Senir* (cf. Deut. 3:9), though LXX (and NEB) extend the northern limit to Lebanon. *Baal Hermon* (only here) may be the site of Caesarea Philippi ... As with the other Transjordanian tribes, the emphasis falls on their extend and large numbers (v. 23, cf. 4:38; 5:9, 10, 16).

[vv. 25-26] The final paragraph provides reasons for the *exile* of the northern tribes in general and the Transjordan tribes in particular. It follows Chronicles' typical practice of quoting earlier biblical material, in this case using 2 Kings 17:7-23 as a general background and selecting specific information from 2 Kings 15:19, 29; 17:6; 18:11. But more importantly, it follows almost exactly the structure of the explanation of Judah's exile in 2 Chronicles 36:14-20, occasionally employing even the same wording.

The same four essential elements are found in both passages. (a) Israel and Judah were *unfaithful to God* (cf. 2 Chr. 36:14 ... (b) they were especially condemned for their idolatry (cf. 2 Chr. 36:14); (c) God sent a foreign army to punish his people (cf. 2 Chr. 36:17; and (d) they went into exile (cf. 2 Chr. 36:18-20).

The experience of exile was fundamentally the same for both kingdoms in origin, execution, and consequence. *God stirred up the spirit* (NIV, RSV) is a typical post-exile expression for a new divine initiative in human affairs (cf. 2 Chr. 21:16; Ezra 1:1; Hag. 1:14). *Pul* is another name for Tiglath-pileser III, found in both 2 Kings 15:19 and the Babylonian Chronicle ('Pulu'). *Hara*, which is not in Kings or elsewhere in the Old Testament, may be an error for 'the cities (MT/mountains (LXX) of the Medes' in 2 Kings 17:6; 18:11, ... or a corruption of 'and the river of' ... *To this day* in this case is an addition to Kings, and presumably refers to the Chronicler's own time, but in other places (e.g. 4:41, 43) it has been carried over from his sources and relates to a variety of earlier dates."

v. The tribes of Levi (6:1-81)

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "*Levi* stands at the center of the tribal genealogies. The tribe's importance is indicated by its position and by the amount of space devoted to it – with Judah (2:1 – 4:23) and Benjamin (7:6-12; 8:1-40), it dominates the genealogies. The chapter divides into two: (a) genealogies of the Aaronite priests and other Levites (vv. 1-53); (b) a list of the Levites' settlements (vv. 54-81).

Both sections deal with the priest separately from the rest of the Levites. Two priestly genealogies (vv. 1-15, 49-53) bracket two lists of Levites (vv. 16-30, 31-48), which are then followed by two settlement lists (vv. 54-60 and vv. 61-81). Unusually in Chronicles, the priests seem to have greater priority than the Levites. Only the priestly line is extended as far as the exile (vv. 1-15), and of course only they enjoyed the privilege of entering the *Most Holy Place* (v. 49) to make *atonement* (v. 49, RSV, NIV). In verses 54-81, the material has been arranged so that the priests are dealt with first (vv. 54-60 = Josh. 21:10-19).

Two notable parallels occur in the lines of Aaron and David (cf. 2:10-17; 3:1-16). Only these two families out of all the tribal lists are traced from the patriarchs to the exile (2:10-17; 3:1-24; 6:1-15), indicating that they form the basis of Israel's future survival. Also, both lines follow immediately upon example of Israelite 'unfaithfulness' which resulted in national disaster (2:7; 5:25; cf. 6:15; 9:1). Judah and Levi therefore seem to be the means through which even covenant-breaking sins could be atoned for (6:49; cf. 2 Chr. 36:22-23). Chapter 6 underlines the point by repeated reminders of Solomon's temple (vv. 10, 32, 53), which was a visible sign of God's desire to forgive sins (2 Chr. 7:15-16).

a. The Aaronite high priests (6:1-15; Mt, v. 27-41)

1 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

2 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.

3 The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

4 Eleazar was the father of Phinehas, Phinehas the father of Abishua,

5 Abishua the father of Bukki, Bukki the father of Uzzi,

6 Uzzi the father of Zerariah, Zerariah the father of Meraioth,

7 Meraioth the father of Amariah, Amariah the father of Ahitub,

8 Ahitub the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Ahimaaaz,

- 9 Ahimaaz the father of Azariah, Azariah the father of Johanan,
 10 Johanan the father of Azariah (it was he who served as priest in the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem),
 11 Azariah the father of Amariah, Amariah the father of Ahitub,
 12 Ahitub the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Shallum,
 13 Shallum the father of Hilkiah, Hilkiah the father of Azariah,
 14 Azariah the father of Seraiah, and Seraiah the father of Jehozadak.
 15 Jehozadak was deported when the Lord sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.**

Although the high-priestly ancestors of Jehozadak (vv. 14-15) are traced back to Levi himself (v. 1) this is not a complete list of Israel's high priests. Eli and his descendants are not included (cf. 1 Sam. 2:27-36; 1 Kgs 2:27), nor are several later high priests (e.g. Jehoiada, 2 Kgs 11 – 12; a third Azariah, cf. vv. 9-10 and 2 Chr. 26:20; Uriah, 2 Kgs 16:11ff.; and a fourth Azariah, 2 Chr. 31:10). Although gaps were normally left in ancient genealogies, it has often been suggested that this list is an artificial composition, centered around *Azariah who served as priest in the temple Solomon built* (v. 10; this not should probably refer to the Azariah in v. 9, as Zadok was high priest at the start of Solomon's reign, 1 Kgs 1:38; 2:35, cf. vv. 8, 53). This view lacks conviction, however, since even by making Azariah of verse 9 the turning-point, the twelve generations from Aaron to Azariah cannot match the ten from Azariah to Jehozadak. Scholars have tried to supply a further name (e.g. Jehoiada ... or Joshua ...) in an attempt to make a more regular pattern, but there is no unanimity.

The six generations from *Levi to Phinehas* (vv. 1-4) are extracted from Exodus 6:16-25 (cf. also Gen. 46:11; Num. 3:17-19; 26:57-61; from *Miriam*, cf. Num. 26:59). They differ in form from the rest of the list in that names of brothers (and one sister!) are given, whereas what follows (vv. 5-14) is a single vertical line of the family of *Zadok* (v. 8; cf. Ezek. 40:46; 44:15; 43:19). It is often alleged that Zadok's descent from Aaron is artificial, but in fact, apart from the names of his father Ahitub (2 Sam. 8:17 = 1 Chr. 18:16), his son Ahimaaz (2 Sam. 15:36; 18:19, 27) and his grandson Azariah (cf. 1 Kgs 4:2), we know nothing about his family tree apart from the information provided in Chronicles (cf. v. 53; 24:3). Repetition of names (e.g. 8, 12) is no evidence against authenticity, and is not at all surprising in a family with a strong sense of history and tradition. The real problem is a lack of external verification, so it is arbitrary to conclude that Chronicles is confused. Although the list is incomplete, other evidence suggests that the order here is accurate. Ezra's genealogy, for example, follows the order of Aaron to Meraioth (vv. 3-6) and Azariah to Seraiah (vv. 11-14) exactly (cf. also 1 Chr. 9:10-11; Neh. 11:10-11). Several names in the list are known elsewhere in the Old Testament, viz. *Azariah* (v. 9; cf. 1 Kgs 22:4ff), *Amariah* (v. 11; cf. 2 Chr. 19:11), *Hilkiah* (v. 13, cf. 2 Kgs 22:4ff), *Seraiah* (v. 14; cf. 2 Kgs 25:18; Neh. 11:11) and *Jehozadak* (vv. 14-15; cf. Hag. 1:1, etc.)."

b. The Levites' genealogy (6:16-30; MT, 6:1-15)

- 16 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
 17 These are the names of the sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei.
 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.
 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites listed according to their fathers:
 20 Of Gershon: Libni his son, Jehath his son, Zimmah his son,
 21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son and Jeatherai his son.**

- 22 The descendants of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son,**
23 Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son,
24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son and Shaul his son.
25 The descendants of Elkanah: Amasai, Ahimoth,
26 Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath his son,
27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son and Samuel his son.
28 The sons of Samuel: Joel the firstborn and Abijah the second son.
29 The descendants of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzazah his son,
30 Shimea his son, Haggiah his son and Asaiah his son.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on this list: “These verses have a re-enumeration of the three sons of Levi, and differ from the enumeration of ver. 1, in being followed by the sons of each of these three, and afterwards by the line of descendants from each, instead of by the sons of only one, Kohath, and his descendant in only one stem, the high priest stem, and with only one object. All these names agree with ... Exodus 6:17-19 and ... Numbers 3:17-20 (comp. also ... Numbers 3:21-36 with 26:57-60), with the trifling exceptions ... in the Hebrew spelling of Gershom and the Authorized Version spelling of Shimei and the Authorized Version Mahali of ... Exodus 6:19. The latter half of ver. 19, according to the Hebrew, should rather refer to what has preceded, and be a ‘subscription,’ though it might best suit the connection to regard it as introducing what was to follow, and as being a ‘superscription.’”

The Tyndale Commentary adds: “Although this list begins in almost exactly the same way as verses 1-15 (‘Gershom,’ vv. 16, 17, etc. [REB. NEB. RSV], is Chronicles’ usual spelling for the more familiar Gershon, v. 1, Exod. 6:16, Num. 3:17), it leads into a different subject, viz, the three main Levitical divisions of the sons of *Gershon* (vv. 10-21), *Kohath* (vv. 22-28), and *Merari* (vv. 29-30). The beginning (vv. 16-19) is determined by Chronicles’ source (Num. 3:17-20), and is in no sense a duplicate of the previous list. Seven generations are given both for the Gershonites and the Merarites, and all three lines seem to end at the time of David, as indicated by *Samuel*’s sons (v. 28; cf. 2 Sam. 8:2) and *Asaiah* (v. 30; cf. 15:6).

The Kohathites present more of a problem, however. *Amminadab*, named as Kohath’s son (v. 22), is never mentioned elsewhere (cf. vv. 2, 18; Exod. 6:18; Num. 3:19; 1 Chr. 23:12). Since this makes it unlikely that he was a fifth son, four alternatives remain: (i) he was Aaron’s father-in-law (cf. Exod. 6:23), (ii) he was a grandson or later descendant, (iii) this is another name for Izhar (cf. vv. 18, 38), or (iv) another name for Amram (cf. v. 18). The main ground for the last view is a hypothesis that each line is represented through firstborn sons, but this is unproven. In fact, comparison with Heman’s family suggests he was equivalent to Izhar (cf. v.38).

The Kohathite line is also unusually long and complex. The problem seems to be solved by the assumption of horizontal lines occurring in verses 22-23 (*Assir* to *Ebiasaph*, cf. Exod. 6:24), verse 25 (*Ahimoth*, = ‘brother of death’!, should be Mahath, cf. v. 35), and verse 28 (EVV rightly add *Joel*, cf. 2 Sam. 8:2), and by the practice of resuming a vertical line by repeating a name. For example, MT has five Elkanahs (four in EVV), though there are probably only two or three (those in vv. 25-26 should be identical).

Interestingly, this also produced seven generations, as with the Gershonites and Merarites. ...

Samuel’s genealogy has been added to this basic tree (vv. 26-28, beginning with *Elkanah his son*), raising the further problem that *Samuel*’s father is also an Ephraimite (1 Sam. 1:1). There are two possible solutions. Either the family has been grafted on because Heman (v. 33) was regarded as a Levite, or ‘Ephraimite’ refers to the locality in which Elkanah lived rather than his family descent. In

favor of the latter is the laxity with which Levites were treated in the Judges period, and Samuel's mother's desire to present him to the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 1:22) is less surprising if Samuel had genuine Levite ancestry. Samuel's line has been included because of its intrinsic interest, and particularly as a result of their relationship with Heman, the musician (vv. 33-38)."

c. The Levitical musicians' genealogy (6:31-48; MT, 6:16-33)

31 These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the Lord after the ark came to rest there.

32 They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them.

33 Here are the men who served, together with their sons: From the Kohathites: Heman, the musician, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel,

34 the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah,

35 the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai,

36 the son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah,

37 the son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah,

38 the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel;

39 and Heman's associate Asaph, who served at his right hand: Asaph son of Berekiah, the son of Shimea,

40 the son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malkijah,

41 the son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah,

42 the son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei,

43 the son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi;

44 and from their associates, the Merarites, at his left hand: Ethan son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch,

45 the son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah,

46 the son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shemer,

47 the son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.

48 Their fellow Levites were assigned to all the other duties of the tabernacle, the house of God.

The Pulpit Commentary observes about this list: "In the early verses of this section we may notice, if not the first beginning, yet some of the earliest crystallization of the forms of religious services. It was given to David to settle the ark after its travels through the wilderness, its sojourn in various places since then, doubtless always within the care of some Levitical family (except when taken by enemies, ... 1 Samuel 4:11; 5., 6.), and in especial its prolonged twenty years' sojourn at Kirjath-jearim (... 1 Samuel 7:1, 2; ... 2 Samuel 6:1-19; 1 Chronicles 13:3-14; 15:1-3; 17:5). It now had rest, though its place of rest was only within 'curtains' (... 2 Samuel 7:2; ... 1 Chronicles 17:1), *i.e.* in a special separate tent prepared for it by David, which tent was probably the suggestion, and as it were the nucleus, of the coming grand temple itself — the house of God. The event was naturally one of great joy and thanksgiving, of which David himself was the chief leader (... 2 Samuel 6:17-21; ... 1 Chronicles 16:1-3); but it appears also that it furnished the occasion of appointing fixed choir conductors, leaders of the service of song' (... 1 Chronicles 16:4-7, 37, 41, 42; 25:1-7).

V. 32 Instances full of illustration of this *ministering... with singing and waiting on their office* are found in ... 2 Chronicles 5:12; 29:26-31; 35:15, 16."

The Tyndale Commentary states: “This paragraph summarizes the Levites’ functions (cf. 1 Chr. 23-26). Basically they were *in charge of the music* (v. 31, cf. v. 32; ‘singing,’ JB, or ‘the service of song,’ RSV, is too limited) and with the *duties of the tabernacle* (v. 48). ‘After the ark rested’ (v. 31, RSV), the musicians were divided between the ark in Jerusalem and the *Tent of Meeting* (v.31) in Gibeon (cf. 16:4-6, 41-42). Their work is characterized as the ‘service’ (NRSV, RSV; *duties* NIV) *of the house of God* (v. 48; cf. 23:28, 32; 25:6; v. 32, *ministered*). No distinction was made between the various forms of service, for each received its value as worship offered to God.

The genealogies are those of the three musical leaders appointed by David, viz *Heman*, a Kohathite (vv. 33-38), *Asaph*, a Gershonite (vv. 39-43), and *Ethan*, a Merarite (vv. 44-47). The arrangement is somewhat different from what we know of post-exile Israel, when Hemanites do not appear (Ezra 2:41 = Neh. 7:44; Neh. 11:17), and nothing in these lists requires a date later than David The Hemanites genealogy is basically the same as verses 22-28, except that all the names are placed in one vertical line. Throughout Chronicles’ genealogies, ‘son’ can have the sense of ‘descendant,’ but here it must be widened to ‘relative.’ Attempts have been made to turn the Asaphites into descendants of ‘Shimei’ (cf. v. 17; by reversing *Jahath* [v. 43] and *Shimei* [v. 42], by omitting Jahath, or by adding another Shimei), in order to derive each line from each family’s second son by analogy with lines descended from the first son in verses 20-30 But this is too precise and hypothetical from the evidence available.”

d. The task of the Aaronite high priests (6:49-53; MT, 6:34-38)

49 But Aaron and his descendants were the ones who presented offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense in connection with all that was done in the Most Holy Place, making atonement for Israel, in accordance with all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.

50 These were the descendants of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son,

51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerariah his son,

52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son,

53 Zadok his son and Ahimaaz his son.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “This paragraph ties in with the high priests’ genealogy (vv. 1-15). By ending this shortened version (vv. 50-53) with *Ahimaaz*, a contemporary of Solomon, attention is drawn to the temple (cf. 1 Chr. 21 – 29; 2 Chr. 2 – 7) as the divinely given means for carrying out the priestly tasks described in verse 49. Two aspects of the priest’s sacrificial role are mentioned, viz. to be responsible for the *offerings* (RSV, NIV ‘sacrifices,’ NEB) of the *Most Holy Place* (RSV, NIV, GNB; ‘most holy things,’ JB) and ‘to make atonement’ (RSV, cf. NIV). Although all priests were involved in these activities, Chronicles appears to be thinking especially of the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:11-17).”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary observes: “We have already had a list of these, (see 1 Chron 6:3-16;) this is a second, but less extensive, and is a proof that the writer of this book had several lists before him, from which he borrowed as he judged proper.”

e. The settlements of the Levites (6:54-81; MT, 6:39-66)

54 These were the locations of their settlements allotted as their territory (they were assigned to the descendants of Aaron who were from the Kohathite clan, because the first lot was for them):

55 They were given Hebron in Judah with its surrounding pasturelands.

- 56 But the fields and villages around the city were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh.**
57 So the descendants of Aaron were given Hebron (a city of refuge), and Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa,
58 Hilen, Debir,
59 Ashan, Juttah and Beth Shemesh, together with their pasturelands.
60 And from the tribe of Benjamin they were given Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth and Anathoth, together
with their pasturelands. These towns, which were distributed among the Kohathite clans, were
thirteen in all.
61 The rest of Kohath's descendants were allotted ten towns from the clans of half the tribe of
Manasseh.
62 The descendants of Gershon, clan by clan, were allotted thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar,
Asher and Naphtali, and from the part of the tribe of Manasseh that is in Bashan.
63 The descendants of Merari, clan by clan, were allotted twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben,
Gad and Zebulun.
64 So the Israelites gave the Levites these towns and their pasturelands.
65 From the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin they allotted the previously named towns. 66
Some of the Kohathite clans were given as their territory towns from the tribe of Ephraim. 67 In the
hill country of Ephraim they were given Shechem (a city of refuge), and Gezer,
68 Jokmeam, Beth Horon,
69 Aijalon and Gath Rimmon, together with their pasturelands.
70 And from half the tribe of Manasseh the Israelites gave Aner and Bileam, together with their
pasturelands, to the rest of the Kohathite clans.
71 The Gershonites received the following: From the clan of the half-tribe of Manasseh they received
Golan in Bashan and also Ashtaroth, together with their pasturelands;
72 from the tribe of Issachar they received Kedesh, Daberath,
73 Ramoth and Anem, together with their pasturelands;
74 from the tribe of Asher they received Mashal, Abdon,
75 Hukok and Rehob, together with their pasturelands;
76 and from the tribe of Naphtali they received Kedesh in Galilee, Hammon and Kiriathaim, together
with their pasturelands.
77 The Merarites (the rest of the Levites) received the following: From the tribe of Zebulun they
received Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmono and Tabor, together with their pasturelands;
78 from the tribe of Reuben across the Jordan east of Jericho they received Bezer in the desert,
Jahzah,
79 Kedemoth and Mephaath, together with their pasturelands;
80 and from the tribe of Gad they received Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim,
81 Heshbon and Jazer, together with their pasturelands.

The Pulpit Commentary states: “The writer returns upon his steps to give the cities and dwelling-places of the Levites, beginning with the priestly members of the Kohathite line (vers. 54-61), then taking those of the Gershonite (ver. 62) and Merarite lines (vers. 63-65) in order; and again in the same order disposing of the members not priestly (vers. 66-70; 71-76; 77-81) of the same three branches. ...

The whole drift of the present passage, with the remainder of the chapter, is made entirely plain by ... Numbers 35:1-8 and ... Joshua 21:1-10. But the omission and the alteration of individual names of places occasion some delay. Our ver. 55 is given somewhat more fully in ... Joshua 21:11; our ver. 56 is identical with ... Joshua 21:12; and our vers. 57-60 correspond substantially with ... Joshua 21:13-19, but from this latter source we are glad to supply the two names Juttah and Gibeon, without which we

cannot add up correctly the *thirteen cities* of ver. 60. Also in Joshua, our *Hilen, Ashan, and Alemeth* appear as *Holon, Ain, and Almon* respectively, although in regard to the intermediate name of these three the places cannot be accepted as identical, for they are mentioned side by side in ... Joshua 19:7 and in ... 1 Chronicles 4:32, but we must admit an error involved. Ver. 56 (see ... Joshua 14:14; 21:12). Ver. 61 seems to be an anticipation of vers. 66-70, with which verses, if we incorporate it, we shall obtain substantially the same results as are found in ... Joshua 21:5, 20-26; but again we are glad of the latter source to supply for us the two places, Eltekeh and Gibbethon, necessary to enable us to count up the *ten cities* of our ver. 61, while our *Jokmeam, Aner, and Bileam* appear as probably the corrected readings of *Kibzaim, Tanach, and Gath-rimmon* respectively in Joshua. The sons of Kohath., left (ver. 61), the residue (Authorized Version, ver. 66), the remnant (ver. 70), point (as above) to the non-priestly descendants in the Kohath line. Summing up, we see that the Kohathite *priests* had thirteen cities from the allotments of Judah and Simeon and Benjamin, and the Kohathite non-priests had ten, from Ephraim, Dan, and West Manasseh. One might detect in all this some germ of the more modern parochial system, so far at least as regards the distributed residence of a clerical and ministerial order, though not with sacred buildings similarly distributed. *V. 62* — The twenty-three cities that belonged to the sons of Kohath are now followed by the thirteen due to the sons of Gershon, taken from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and half Manasseh. The fact only is stated here, the details being supplied in vers. 71-76. And it is easily to be seen that, as from the most important tribes were levied the cities for Levites first in precedence, so the same principle is observed to the end.”

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “A rearranged and slightly summarized version of Joshua 21 indicates that, as representatives of all Israel, the Levites were to be settled throughout the Promised Land. If this list represents historical reality, it is most likely to have originated in the Davidic-Solomonic period when many Canaanite towns were first incorporated into Israel, but it is more probably that it paints an idealistic picture which may never have been completed. The main change from Joshua 21 is that the *descendants of Aaron* have been brought forward (vv. 54-60; cf. Josh. 21:10-19), re-emphasizing the central importance of the priestly line.

The structure is as follows:

- vv. 54-60: Aaronites from the *Kohathite* clans;
- vv. 61-63: Summary of individual Levite clans (cf. vv. 66-81);
- vv. 64-65: General summary (v. 65 refers to the Aaronites, cf. Josh. 21:4, 9);
- vv. 66-70: *Rest* of the *Kohathite* clans (cf. v. 61);
- vv. 71-76: *Gershonites* (cf. v. 62);
- vv. 77-81: *Merarites* (cf. v. 63).

There are some minor variations from Joshua 21, and Chronicles occasionally seems to be using a different text base (e.g. vv. 77-78; cf. Josh. 21:34-36). Sometimes, the Chronicles’ reading is superior, as in verse 7 (*Bileam* [MT] or ‘*Ibleam*’ [VSS] for Gath-rimmon, Josh. 21:25, cf. v. 24), and possibly in verse 59 (*Ashan* for *Ain*, Josh. 21:16). Conversely, *Juttah* (v. 59; cf. Josh. 21:16), *Gibeon* (v. 60; cf. Josh. 21:17), *Eltekeh* (v. 69; cf. Josh. 21:23) and *Gibbethon* (v. 69; cf. Josh. 21:23) have probably been accidentally omitted from MT, while verse 61 should read ‘clans of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and half Manasseh’ instead of the confusion of many EVV (and MT; cf. Josh. 21:5). As part of his summarizing technique, the Chronicler has also not identified *Golan* (v. 71), *Kedesh* (v. 76), *Bezer* (v. 78), and *Ramoth* (v. 80) as cities of refuge (cf. vv. 57, 67; Josh. 21:13, etc.; Num. 35:9-34; Josh. 20:1-9).”

vi. The West Jordan tribes (7:1-40)

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “These six or seven tribes are treated quite briefly in contrast to the treatment given to Levi (ch. 6). All apart from Benjamin belonged to the old northern kingdom. As in chapter 5, attention is drawn to the history and geography of those parts of the Promised Land which in the Chronicler’s day were no longer Israelite. Perhaps influenced by prophecies such as Ezekiel 37:15-28, Chronicles retained a sense of all the tribes of Israel united together. Later in the book, united action also appears in support for David’s kingship (1 Chr. 12) and the preparations for Solomon’s temple (1 Chr. 27). It appears that the Chronicler’s hopes for future unity depended on Israel’s accepting God’s purposes for David’s line and the centrality of temple worship (2 Chr. 30).

The records available in Jerusalem for those tribes in the distant north of the old kingdom of Israel were probably rather sketchy. In some cases (Issachar, Naphtali, Asher), Chronicles’ account is clearly based on earlier biblical material in Genesis 46 and Numbers 26, but for other tribes (Benjamin, Dan, Manasseh, Ephraim) even this foundation was not used, and one can only make an informed guess as to the exact sources. Geographical information of the type frequent in chapters 2-6 is provided only for the Joseph tribes (vv. 28-29), and some use has clearly been made of military census material.”

The Tyndale Commentary continues:

a. The tribe of Issachar (7:1-5)

1 The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron — four in all.

2 The sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam and Samuel — heads of their families. During the reign of David, the descendants of Tola listed as fighting men in their genealogy numbered 22,600.

3 The son of Uzzi: Izrahiah. The sons of Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel and Isshiah. All five of them were chiefs.

4 According to their family genealogy, they had 36,000 men ready for battle, for they had many wives and children.

5 The relatives who were fighting men belonging to all the clans of Issachar, as listed in their genealogy, were 87,000 in all.

The four basic divisions (v. 1) follow Genesis 46:13, Numbers 26:23-24 very closely, but after that only the descendants of *Tola* are given. Some of the names reappear in Judges 10:1, but that verse merely testifies to the continuing popularity of the names of the tribe’s ancestors. Verses 2-5 seem to be taken from a military census in *David’s* reign (v. 2; cf. 4:31), either the ill-fated enterprise of 2 Samuel 24 = 1 Chronicles 21 (cf. 1 Chr. 27:23-24) or a count of the soldiers who joined David at Hebron (cf. 12:23-37). Issachar’s leader under David, Omri son of Michael (1 Chr. 27:18), could also be related to the *Michael* of verse 3. The reference to David suggests that the tribal lists are intended to point to him as the person who really united Israel. The list is obviously incomplete, since the total in verse 5 is more than the sum of those in verses 2 and 4. The number *five* (v. 3) must include Izrahiah as well as his four sons. Their family seems to have been at least one of the largest in Israel (cf. the figures in 5:18; 7:2, 7, 9, 11, 40) – hence the note, *they had many wives and children* (v. 4).

b. The tribe of Benjamin (7:6-12a)

6 Three sons of Benjamin: Bela, Beker and Jediel.

7 The sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth and Iri, heads of families — five in all. Their genealogical record listed 22,034 fighting men.

8 The sons of Beker: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth and Alemeth. All these were the sons of Beker.

9 Their genealogical record listed the heads of families and 20,200 fighting men.

10 The son of Jediahel: Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Kenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish and Ahishahar.

11 All these sons of Jediahel were heads of families. There were 17,200 fighting men ready to go out to war.

12 The Shuppites and Huppites were the descendants of Ir

These Benjaminite names are probably taken from the same military census list as verses 1-5 (cf. the repeated numbers of *fighting men*), with only minimal contact with Genesis 46:21; Numbers 26:38-40. If that is so, they are probably of Davidic origin, and are of a different character from the geographical data about Benjamin and the Saulide genealogy in chapter 8. If the census was based on David's Hebron assembly, most Benjaminites were then still loyal to Saul's house (cf. 1 Chr. 12:29), so explaining the small number of Benjamin clans here as compared with the earlier texts. The genealogy is regular in structure, listing the descendants of *Bela* (v. 7), *Beker* (vv. 8-9), and *Jediael* (vv. 10-11, unknown elsewhere) in the order of verse 6. The *Shuppites and Huppites* (v. 12) or 'Shuppim and Huppim' (RSV, cf. GNB), unnecessarily omitted by REB, NEB, appear in slightly different form in Genesis 46:11; Numbers 26:39, and may also be the same as Shephuphan and Hiram in 1 Chronicles 8:5.

c. The tribe of Dan (?) 7:12b)

and the Hushites the descendants of Aher.

Most commentators recognize the existence of a very brief statement about Dan here (REB, NEB, GNB). In favor of this are that Dan follows Benjamin in both Genesis 46 and Numbers 26, that *the descendants of Bilhah* (v. 13) implies another tribe besides Naphtali, and that 'Hushim' (*Hushites*, NIV) is the only son of Dan in Genesis 46:23 (cf. Shuham, Num. 26:42). ... The omission of Dan (and in 6:61, 69) is more likely to be the result of an accident in transmission than a deliberate snub against this northernmost tribe (cf. especially its appearance in 2:2; also 12:35; 27:22).

d. The tribe of Naphtali (7:13)

13 The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem—the descendants of Bilhah.

The four main clans of Naphtali appear exactly as in Genesis 46:24, Numbers 46:48-49, with the exception of *Shallum* (NIV fn.) for Shillem. Their neighbor Zebulun is excluded altogether, though on the basis of the order in the earlier texts, it might be expected after Issachar. *Bilhah* was one of Jacob's concubines (cf. 46:25).

e. The half tribe of Manasseh (7:14-19)

14 The descendants of Manasseh: Asriel was his descendant through his Aramean concubine. She gave birth to Makir the father of Gilead.

15 Makir took a wife from among the Huppites and Shuppites. His sister's name was Maacah. Another descendant was named Zelophehad, who had only daughters.

16 Makir's wife Maacah gave birth to a son and named him Peresh. His brother was named Sheresh, and his sons were Ulam and Rakem.

17 The son of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead son of Makir, the son of Manasseh.

18 His sister Hammoleketh gave birth to Ishhod, Abiezzer and Mahlah.

19 The sons of Shemida were: Ahian, Shechem, Likhi and Aniam.

The genealogy of Manasseh is in some disarray, and can be reconstructed only with the help of Numbers 26-29-33 and Joshua 17:1-2 Even then, the relationship between *Makir the father of Gilead* (vv. 14-17) and the other clans remains unclear. Ariel's (v. 14) ancestor was apparently one of Gilead's descendants (Num. 26:31), but the real interest here is in his foreign mother (or wife?). Such mixed marriages (cf. 2:3, 35; 3:2) were outlawed by Ezra and Nehemiah. *Maacah* appears to be Makir's wife (v.16) and sister (v. 15), but 'sister' probably has the sense of relative rather than anything more specific (the same may also be true of *Hammoleketh*, v. 18). *The Huppites and Shuppites* (v. 15, cf. v. 12) are more likely to have been Maacah's relatives (NIV) rather than Makir's sons (RSV, GNB, JB), since these tribes are not attributed to Manasseh elsewhere. *Zelophehad* (v. 15), a descendant of Hopher (Num. 26:33; 27:1-11; Josh. 17:3-4), and *Shemida* (v. 19) were further clans within the tribe. *These were the clans of Gilead ...* (v. 17b) looks very much like a concluding sentence. It could refer either to verses 16-17 or to the whole tribe up to that point. In either case, verses 18-19 seem to be a supplement.

f. The tribe of Ephraim (7:20-29), 20-27

20 The descendants of Ephraim: Shuthelah, Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath his son,

21 Zabad his son and Shuthelah his son. Ezer and Elead were killed by the native-born men of Gath, when they went down to seize their livestock.

22 Their father Ephraim mourned for them many days, and his relatives came to comfort him.

23 Then he lay with his wife again, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. He named him Beriah, because there had been misfortune in his family.

24 His daughter was Sheerah, who built Lower and Upper Beth Horon as well as Uzen Sheerah.

25 Rephah was his son, Resheph his son, Telah his son, Tahan his son,

26 Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,

27 Nun his son and Joshua his son.

28 Their lands and settlements included Bethel and its surrounding villages, Naaran to the east, Gezer and its villages to the west, and Shechem and its villages all the way to Ayyah and its villages.

29 Along the borders of Manasseh were Beth Shan, Taanach, Megiddo and Dor, together with their villages. The descendants of Joseph son of Israel lived in these towns.

This is a genealogy in two parts (20-21a, 25-27), and an historical note (21b-24). The first part of the genealogy has a design unique to Chronicles, in which brothers (*Shuthelah, Bered, Tahath*, cf. Num. 26:35) are placed in a vertical relationship (cf. the Kohathite genealogies in 6:22-28, 33-38). Whether this applies elsewhere in this genealogy, it is now impossible to say. The second part gives the ancestry of *Joshua* (v. 27). Although mentioned only here in Chronicles, his name is consistent with the genealogies' emphasis on the conquest and occupation of the Promised Land (e.g. 4:38-43; 5:8-10, 18-22; 6:54:81) and on the subsequent completion of the task by David (e.g. 13:5; 17:9-10; 18-20).

The historical note probably also refers to the period of conquest or to some later incident in the settlement of Canaan. This kind of date is preferable to one in patriarchal times for two reasons: *went down* (v. 21) is inappropriate for a journey from Egypt to Canaan, and the building of the two *Beth Horons* (v. 24) is a natural activity for a clan already resident in the area. *Gath* (v. 21) may be Gittaim rather than the famous Philistine city (cf. 2 Sam. 4:3), since the latter was nearer to Beth Horon, but an Ephraimite raid on either locality is quite feasible. *Ezer and Elead* (v. 21) are of uncertain relationship with the genealogies, while *Ephraim* (v. 22) on our interpretation must be a later descendant of Joseph's son. *Beriah's* name (v. 23) is associated with the similarly sounding Heb. word for 'disaster' (NEB), 'trouble' (GNB) or 'misfortune' (NIV, JB).

28-29. The geographical details relate to both Ephraim and Manasseh, as indicated by *the descendants of Joseph*. Although the material is loosely based on part of Joshua 16 – 17, the inclusion of former Canaanite cities like *Gezer* and *Megiddo* implies their submission to Israelite sovereignty under David.

g. The tribe of Asher (7:30-40)

30 *The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah. Their sister was Serah.*

31 *The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malkiel, who was the father of Birzaith.*

32 *Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer and Hotham and of their sister Shua.*

33 *The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal and Ashvath. These were Japhlet's sons.*

34 *The sons of Shomer: Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah and Aram.*

35 *The sons of his brother Helem: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh and Amal.*

36 *The sons of Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah,*

37 *Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran and Beera.*

38 *The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispah and Ara.*

39 *The sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel and Rizia.*

40 *All these were descendants of Asher — heads of families, choice men, brave warriors and outstanding leaders. The number of men ready for battle, as listed in their genealogy, was 26,000.*

These names are based on a military census list (cf. v. 40), combined with the basic clan names (v. 30) from Genesis 46:17 and Numbers 26:44-46, and, as with Issachar, only on clan (*Beriah*) is followed through. The genealogy has several symmetrical patterns, as is structured around two descendants who each had four descendants, viz. *Heber* (v. 32) and his offspring *Helem* (v. 35). Since Helem is probably identical with *Hotham* (v. 32), and *Shomer* (v. 32) with 'Shemer' (v. 34, RSV), descendants of each of Heber's sons occur in verses 33-35. The first two each had three sons, assuming *Abi* (v. 34, NIV, NEB) is really 'his brother' (GNB, RSV). Further descendants of Helem occur in verses 36-39, possibly in a regular pattern based on the names in verse 35. *Zophah* clearly recurs in verse 36, and the same may apply to *Imna/Imra* (v. 36), *Shelesh/Shilshah* (v. 37), and *Amal/Ulla* (v. 39). *Ithran* (v. 37) also appears to be the same as *Jether* (v. 38). Some of the names seem to be connected with the southern parts of Mount Ephraim, in the area where Saul's asses went missing (cf. 1 Sam. 9:4-5). This may well explain the inclusion of Asher after Ephraim (the order is different in 1 Chr. 2:1-2), but its significance for a tribe that was otherwise located in western Galilee remains unclear.

vii. The tribe of Benjamin (8:1-40)

Benjamin has already been dealt with in 7:6-12a, so why the apparent repetition? In fact, the two lists differ in character and purpose, and there is little overlap. The military census which lies behind 7:1-40, for example, is not evident here. One suggestion for allocating extra space to Benjamin is that it was, albeit briefly, a royal tribe, but an interest in tribal geography is more likely to be the key to this chapter's inclusion. It is concerned mainly with Benjaminite settlements, especially Jerusalem (vv. 28, 32), but also Geba (v. 6), Ono and Lod (v. 12), Aijalon (v. 13), Gibeon (v. 29), and even Moab (v.8). Benjamin's last position in the tribal list is paralleled by the account of the first tribe, Judah, which also emphasizes tribal geography (cf. 2:42-55; 4:1-23). In fact, 'Judah and Benjamin' are frequently mentioned together in Chronicles, and Benjamin very rarely appears on its own, either in Chronicles (cf. 3.g. 2 Chr. 11:1ff; 14:8; 15:2ff; 31:1) or in Ezra-Nehemiah (cf. e.g. Ezra 1:5; 4:1; Neh. 11:4-9). Together they formed first the southern kingdom of Judah and then the post-exilic community. Benjamin's appearance here, therefore, is a sign of its partnership with Judah in preserving Israel's identity and traditions. In particular, the antiquity of Benjamin's claim to its tribal territory must have been a real source of encouragement for Chronicles' readers who live in the same area (cf. 9:2ff). The land mattered, because it was part of a promise which God had not withdrawn.

But to which period does this list refer? Many of the Benjaminite settlements mentioned here recur in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:26ff. = Neh. 7:30ff.; Neh. 11:7-9 = 1 Chr. 9:7-9; Neh. 11:31-36), suggesting a possible post-exile origin. Since, however, the places listed in Ezra 2:26ff. are said to be resettled, 1 Chronicles 8 might equally refer to the pre-exilic period, either during the United Monarchy or perhaps the expansion under Josiah. There seems little to choose between these various alternatives.

The chapter divides clearly into two parts:

- (a) Heads of families (vv. 6, 10, 13, 28) listed according to their places of settlement (vv. 1-28) and
- (b) A genealogy of *Saul's* family (vv. 29-40).

a. Settlement of Benjaminite families (8:1-28)

1 Benjamin was the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second son, Aharah the third,

2 Nohah the fourth and Rapha the fifth.

3 The sons of Bela were: Addar, Gera, Abihud,

4 Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,

5 Gera, Shephuphan and Huram.

6 These were the descendants of Ehud, who were heads of families of those living in Geba and were deported to Manahath:

7 Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera, who deported them and who was the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

8 Sons were born to Shaharaim in Moab after he had divorced his wives Hushim and Baara.

9 By his wife Hodesh he had Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam,

10 Jeuz, Sakia and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of families.

11 By Hushim he had Abitub and Elpaal.

12 The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, Shemed (who built Ono and Lod with its surrounding villages),

13 and Beriah and Shema, who were heads of families of those living in Aijalon and who drove out the inhabitants of Gath.

14 Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth,

15 Zebadiah, Arad, Eder,

16 Michael, Ishpah and Joha were the sons of Beriah.

17 Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber,

18 Ishmerai, Izliah and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal.

- 19 Jakim, Zicri, Zabdi,**
20 Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel,
21 Adaiiah, Beraiah and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei.
22 Ishpan, Eber, Eliel,
23 Abdon, Zicri, Hanan,
24 Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah,
25 Iphdeiah and Penuel were the sons of Shashak.
26 Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah,
27 Jaareshiah, Elijah and Zicri were the sons of Jeroham.
28 All these were heads of families, chiefs as listed in their genealogy, and they lived in Jerusalem.

Two strands may be discerned, the families of Ehud (vv. 1-7) and of Elpaal (vv. 8-27). The names listed as the descendants of *Benjamin* (vv. 1-2) and of his firstborn son *Bela* (vv. 3-5) seem to lead to *the descendants of Ehud* (v. 6), especially if *Gera the father of Ehud* (v. 3, NIV fn., NEB, JB) is read instead of Abihud (NIV, RSV). This seems quite probable in view of Judges 3:15, and Ehud's prominence here is more easily understood if he is identified with the famous judge of the same name (Judg. 3:12-30). If this is accepted, it is also possible that the following names in verses 4-5, *Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, Gera*, were either Ehud's sons (cf. the first three names in v. 7) or further sons of Gera. The second *Gera* (v. 5; were really two brothers with the same name?) either belongs to a later generation than the first or is possibly a second reference to the same individual. This reconstruction is not arbitrary, but based on passages such as 6:22-25; 33-38; 7:20, where brothers are given as sons and a name may be resumed by repeating it. *Shephuphan* (= Shephupham, Num. 26:39, and Shuppim, 1 Chr. 7:12 and *Huram* (= Hupham, Num. 26:39, and Huppim, 1 Chr. 7:12) in verse 5 may be regarded as either Bela's descendants or having a looser relationship with Benjamin (cf. Gen.46:21; Num. 26:39)....

The list also focuses on the location of Ehud's descendants in *Geba* (v. 6). This was a well-known Benjaminite town (e.g. 1 Kgs 15:22; 2 Kgs 23:8), but, since its inhabitants preferred to return from Babylon to its northern neighbor Michmash (Neh. 11:31; cf. 1 Sam. 14:5; Isa. 10:29), the period of residence mentioned here is most likely to refer to pre-exilic times, if not to the days of the judges. The apparent deportations in verses 6-7 are more likely to refer to tribal movements (a third migration to Moab is implied by v. 8), since Manahath (v. 6) was in either Edom (1 Chr. 1:40) or Judah (1 Chr. 2:52, 54).

How verse 8-27 relates to the preceding paragraph is not clear. Like Saul's genealogy (vv. 28-40), it is probably an independent list, though there is a possible link through Ehud's Moabite connections (cf. v. 8 and Judg. 3:28-30). The names are those of *heads of families* (vv. 10, 28), descended from an otherwise unknown *Shaharaim* (v. 8) through his wives *Hadesh* (vv. 9-10a) and *Hushim* (v. 11. cf. v. 8; 'Mahasham,' NEB), and centered on one of his sons *Elpaal* (vv. 11, 12, 18). The basic pattern is quite regular: after tracing Elpaal's parentage (vv. 10-12), the relatives of his sons named in verses 13-14 are listed in verses 15-27, viz. *Beriah* (vv. 13, 15-16), *Shema/Shimei* (vv. 13, 19-21), *Shashak* (vv. 14, 22-25), and *Jeremoth/Jeroham* (vv. 14, 26-27). Although this leaves one group of Elpaal's sons without descendants (v. 12) and another in an unexpected position (vv. 17-18), these exceptions might be explained by the geographical notes embedded in the lists.

These notes offer clear evidence of the Benjaminites' expansion (especially v. 13). Several of the places mentioned were on Benjamin's borders, and the passage invites comparison with the emphasis on tribal advance in e.g. 4:24 – 5:22. *Ono* and *Lod* (v. 12) were on the coastal plain near Joppa, while *Aijalon* was strategically located on Judah's border with the Philistines and the northern kingdom. Although Ono and Lod are mentioned in the Old Testament only in post-exilic passages (Ezra 2:33 =

Neh. 6:2; 11:35), they certainly existed from the middle of the second millennium. This kind of expansion might derive from the reigns of David, Rehoboam (cf. 2 Chr. 11:10; 28:18), Hezekiah (cf. 1 Chr. 4:41) or Judah. The move to *Moab* (v. 8) seems to be due to the special circumstances of *divorce* (cf. v. 8, NIV, GNB), though it could reflect David's conquests in that area (1 Chr. 18:2). Most of these families, however, lived in *Jerusalem* (v. 28). Verse 28 is certainly a conclusion to this section rather than an introduction to the next, even though it is repeated with verses 29-38 in 9:34-44. Its ending, 'they lived in (place names)' is reversed as a deliberate contrast at the start of verse 29, 'In (place name) they/(he?) lived,' and Saul's relatives are associated with their own locations (vv. 29, 32).

b. Genealogy of Saul's family (8:29-40)

**29 Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah,
30 and his firstborn son was Abdon, followed by Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,
31 Gedor, Ahio, Zeker
32 and Mikloth, who was the father of Shimeah. They too lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.
33 Ner was the father of Kish, Kish the father of Saul, and Saul the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua,
Abinadab and Esh-Baal.
34 The son of Jonathan: Merib-Baal, who was the father of Micah.
35 The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea and Ahaz.
36 Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah, Jehoaddah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri,
and Zimri was the father of Moza.
37 Moza was the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son and Azel his son.
38 Azel had six sons, and these were their names: Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and
Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel.
39 The sons of his brother Eshek: Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second son and Eliphelet the third.
40 The sons of Ulam were brave warriors who could handle the bow. They had many sons and
grandsons-150 in all. All these were the descendants of Benjamin.**

The first section is centered on *Saul*, the best know of all the Benjaminites in the Old Testament. The genealogy, most of which is repeated in 9:35-44, follows the same pattern as the two preceding it, with the main figures in the center dividing the rest into two parts: the period up to Saul and his four sons (vv. 29-32), and twelve generations from Saul's sons *Jonathan* (vv. 33-40).

Most EVV rightly supply *Jeiel* (NEB, 'Jehiel') in verse 29 (cf. 9:35). *Father of Gibeon* (v. 29) is a phrase reminiscent of Judah's genealogy Since individuals normally gave their names to places rather than the reverse, and since the Gibeonites were originally Canaanites incorporated into Israel (Josh. 9), it appears that Saul's ancestry included some Canaanite blood. On the analogy of verses 3-5 (Bela's sons), the names in verse 30-32a may be Jeiel's relatives rather than specifically his sons. At any rate, *Ner* (v. 31, NIV, GNB, JB) should probably be included (with 9:36 and LXX (A) among them, even though it is impossible to reconcile all the details of verse 30, 33 with 1 Samuel 9:1; 14:49-51. Many scholars emend the text of 1 Samuel in the light of this list, making Ner Saul's grandfather (in 1 Sam. 9:1) and Abner his uncle (1 Sam. 14:50), but an equally possible alternative is that Ner was the name of both his uncle (v. 30; 9:36; 1 Sam. 14:50) and his grandfather (v. 33; 9:39). The differences cannot be explained by regarding this list as a post-exilic creation, for the inclusion of 'Baal' names (vv. 30, 33, 34) shows that it originated probably no later than the ninth century BC. *Esh-Baal* (v. 33) is known elsewhere as Ishvi (1 Sam. 14:49) and Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 2:8 – 4:12), while *Merib-Baal* (v. 34) is Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4 9:6ff.). The names from Micah (34) onward are unknown apart from the

parallel list in chapter 9, nor is it certain whether they come down to the exile as in the lines of David (3:10-16) and the high priests (6:1-15), especially as the number of generations here is smaller. *Bokeru* (v. 38) might be read as ‘his firstborn,’ and there are a number of minor differences with 9:35-44.

ix. Conclusion to the tribal lists (9:1)

1 All Israel was listed in the genealogies recorded in the book of the kings of Israel. The people of Judah were taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.

This verse is a conclusion to the tribal lists, parallel to 2:1-2, and does not belong with the rest of chapter 9. *All Israel* (cf. 2:1) includes all the tribes, not just those who happened to form the Chronicler’s own community (those listed in 9:2-34). In fact throughout these lists the Chronicler has shown a healthy discontent with his contemporary situation, pointing instead to God’s promises concerning the land (hence the emphasis on Jacob and the continuity from his sons to exile). However, the mention of exile shows that the current situation was no accident, but the result of unfaithfulness ... towards God. The downfall of Saul’s kingdom (10:13) and of the northern (cf. v. 25) and southern (2 Chr. 36:14) kingdoms were all traced to the same underlying cause. The inclusivist nature of this verse suggests that ‘all Israel’ is the subject of *were taken captive*, which would be quite consistent with Chronicles’ description of the northern and southern kingdoms. As a result, ‘Book/Scroll of the Kings of Israel and Judah (cf. JB and 2 Chr. 27:7; 35:27; 36:8) is preferable to *book of the kings of Israel* (cf. 2 Chr. 20:34), despite the Massoretic punctuation. This source refers either to the census list from which parts of the genealogies derived, or to a much longer official source containing Israel’s genealogies and history.

c. Repopulating Jerusalem (9:2-34)

1 Chronicles 9 is made up of two lists: verses 2-34, those who resettled Jerusalem; verses 35-44, the genealogy of Saul. The main subject matter is the list of Jerusalem residents, since the latter section really introduces the account of Saul’s dynasty (ch. 20). Occupation of Jerusalem is a key feature in the restoration of post-exile Israel, and is the natural outcome of Chronicles’ geographical emphasis in 2:1 – 9:1, especially the sections on Judah and Benjamin. The list is almost certainly intended to be read as a unit, even though its contents are uneven and it shows substantial difference from Nehemiah 11 More significantly, apart from 3:17-24, it is the only part of Chronicles from approximately the author’s own time.

Verses 2-17 have several points of contact with Nehemiah 11:3-19, but the exact nature of the relationship is not immediately obvious. A number of commentators ... believe that both Chronicles and Nehemiah have used a common original for their own separate purposes, but it is also possible that either Chronicles or Nehemiah is the source of the other. To illustrate the difficulty [one scholar] has noted that there are about 81 personal names in Nehemiah’s list and 71 in Chronicles’ version, but only about 35 in each list correspond. In fact, the most probable solution is that Chronicles is the borrower, as shown by four considerations. First, the numbers in Chronicles are consistently higher, though the differences are not enormous. Compare, for example, the 956 Benjaminites (v. 9) as against 928 in Nehemiah 11:8, and the 7 named Levites (vv. 14-16) as against 6 in Nehemiah 11:15-18. Secondly, Nehemiah 11:1-2 describes the beginning of Nehemiah’s policy of the resettlement of Jerusalem, and the higher numbers in Chronicles would make sense if they reflected a continuation of that policy. Thirdly, reference to the *temple servants* in verse 2 (Heb. *nêtîmîm*) is unique in Chronicles, and is not followed up in the subsequent list, but they do occur frequently in Ezra-Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra 7:7; 8:20;

Neh. 10:28; 11:3; 21). Finally, verse 2 (= Neh. 11:3) is already part of the editorial framework in Nehemiah 11 rather than the list itself

It may be possible to pinpoint the relationship between the two lists a little more precisely. The fact that the numbers in 1 Chronicles 9 represent only a slight increase of those in Nehemiah 11, while many individuals remain the same, suggests that a new generation has partly replaced the earlier *heads of families* (cf. vv. 9, 13, 34), and that 1 Chronicles 9 is perhaps half a generation later than Nehemiah 11:2-17.

This conclusion, however, determines only the nature of the relationship between the two passages, and does not by itself settle the date of 1 Chronicles 9:2-34. For this latter issue, there are two main alternatives. Either 1 Chronicles 9:2-34 derives from about half a generation after the repopulation of Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1-2) which probably took place under Nehemiah or else it belongs after the final compilation of the lists in Nehemiah 11 – 12. In the latter case, at least three generations after Nehemiah and a musical contemporary of his named Mattaniah must be allowed (Neh. 11:17; 1 Chr. 9:15), because of the mention of the great-grandsons of both Mattaniah (Neh. 11:22) and of Eliashib, high priest under Nehemiah (Neh. 12:11, 22). It is tempting to adopt the former possibility, since this would allow the conclusion that the compiler of 1 Chronicles 9:2-34 was actually describing changes in his own time. Perhaps some of the new names, especially among the gatekeepers where the variations are much more marked, were even of people known to him personally. This view would also be supported by the observation that the compiler exercises here a far greater freedom with earlier biblical material than is evident elsewhere in the genealogies. Certainty is unfortunately not possible, and neither can we know whose work the Chronicler has taken over.

Whichever view is preferred, the more important point is that verses 2-34 are a sure sign that the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem was a continuing process. Here at the meeting-point of the genealogies (1 Chr. 1 – 9) and the narratives (1 Chr. 10 – 2 Chr. 36), post exilic Israelites are shown to be caught up in God's still-developing purposes for Israel. They are heirs of the generations descended from Adam (ch. 1) and from the twelve tribes (chs. 2 – 8) – it is surely no mistake that *Ephraim and Manasseh* (v. 3) are added to Nehemiah 11:4, even though there is no up-to-date information about their settlements. Their return to the Promised Land (v.2), and particularly to *Jerusalem* (vv. 3-34), is a clear and visible sign that Israel has survived the exile (cf. v.1). Divine judgment on Israel's 'unfaithfulness' (v. 1; cf. v. 25; 2 Chr. 36:14) had not after all brought Israel's history to a full stop. Rather, genealogies that once seemed dead are now alive again (cf. Ezek. 37:1-14), and the Chronicler and his community are living witness to a hope rooted in the very creation of humanity.

All this means that Chronicles has taken the history of Israel a stage further than 1 and 2 Kings. Although 2 Kings ends on a note of genuine hope (2 Kgs 25:27-30), it is restrained and Israel is still in exile. But now the winter is over, and these lists are a definite sign that spring has begun to arrive. The Israel of 1 Chronicles 9 was a visible fulfillment of the prophetic hope (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22-23). Though these names are now largely unknown, a real sense of excitement emerges of a community seeing history, and divine history at that, unfold before their very eyes. Not that everything was yet complete. The Chronicler must have been painfully aware of that, but his emphasis on temple personnel and activities (vv. 10-34) naturally points forward to his major concern for the temple (1 Chr. 21 – 2 Chr. 7) and his hope that prayer inspired by the temple will bring a further healing and restoration for Israel's land (cf. 2 Chr. 7:14). The author of Chronicles therefore saw his generation as being far from helpless spectators of the outworking of God's purposes. They had the opportunity to be participants, to exercise faith in those purposes by continuing to repopulate Jerusalem (vv. 3-9) and giving priority to the details of temple worship (vv. 10-34).

i. Resettling the towns (9:2)

2 Now the first to resettle on their own property in their own towns were some Israelites, priests, Levites and temple servants.

The exact significance of this verse, which stands apart from the rest of the list, depends on the meaning of the Hebrew *hāri'šōnīm*. Older commentators ... thought that it referred to pre-exilic inhabitants on the basis of the context of chapters 1 – 8, and therefore had the sense of ‘former.’ Others translate it ‘first,’ with reference to those who returned in 538 BC in direct response to Cyrus’ edict ..., or even as ‘chief,’ like the comparable word in Nehemiah 11:3. Most probably, however, it is a general statement that those who came back from exile (v. 1) settled *first* in *their ... towns* (cf. JB, NIV) before making any significant move to inhabit Jerusalem (vv. 3-34; MT makes a sharp contrast with the beginning of v. 3, ‘But in Jerusalem there lived ...’).

‘Their ancestral land’ (NEB, *their own property*, NIV) is a term rarely found in Chronicles (only 1 Chr. 7:28; 2 Chr. 11:14; 31:1). Its occurrence here evokes its frequent use in Moses (e.g. Lev. 25:10ff; Num. 27:4) and Joshua (e.g. Josh. 21:12; 22:4), confirming the links with earlier Israel. ‘Israel’ (RSV) here represents the ‘Israelite layman’ (GNB, cf. NEB), as is usual in Ezra–Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra 2:70; 10:5, 25). The *temple servants* is a group mentioned frequently in Ezra–Nehemiah, but who do not appear elsewhere in Chronicles or even in the rest of the Old Testament. Either they stand for the gatekeepers (vv. 17-26), since the temple servants are omitted in the following list and the gatekeepers are omitted in verse 2, or more probably, since they are elsewhere distinguished from the gatekeepers, they are a further group of temple assistants whose presence is recalled on the basis of Nehemiah 11:3.

The rest of this section (vv. 3-34) is concerned with repopulating Jerusalem. This list appears to be contemporary either with the Chronicler himself, or with the time immediately after the implementation of Nehemiah’s policy that at least 10% of the population should live in Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1-2...). It is divided by Chronicles as follows:

ii. Laymen in Jerusalem (9:3-9)

***3 Those from Judah, from Benjamin, and from Ephraim and Manasseh who lived in Jerusalem were:
4 Uthai son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, a descendant of Perez son of Judah.***

5 Of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn and his sons.

6 Of the Zerahites: Jewel. The people from Judah numbered 690.

7 Of the Benjamites: Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah;

8 Ibneiah son of Jeroham; Elah son of Uzzi, the son of Micri; and Meshullam son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah.

9 The people from Benjamin, as listed in their genealogy, numbered 956. All these men were heads of their families.

Representatives of four tribes are mentioned (v. 3) as against two in Nehemiah 11:4-9. Although there appears to be no further information about *Ephraim and Manasseh*, they are surely included as representatives of the twelve tribes of chapters 2 – 8 (cf. 5:23-26; 7:14-29) to indicate Israel’s increasing expansion and unity (for similar examples involving these two tribes, cf. 2 Chr. 30:11, 18; 34:9). The descendants of *Judah* (vv. 4-6) are classified according to the three sons of Judah himself who produced children, Perez (v. 4; cf. 1:4-5; 4:1), Shelah (v. 5, = *the Shilonites*, NIV, RSV, JB; cf. 2:3; 4:21), and

Zerah (v. 6; cf. 2:4, 6-8). The names are those of *heads of families* (cf. vv. 9:34). *Jeuel* is not mentioned in Nehemiah 11, *Uthai* might be the same as Athaiah (Neh. 11:4), and *Asaiah* is probably identical with Maaseiah (Neh. 11:5).

Although the two versions of the Judahite genealogies show some variation, divergence is much more marked in the case of the *Benjaminites* (vv. 7-9). Nehemiah 11:7-9 seems to list one family head and four other officials, while Chronicles has four (or five?) leaders. Only *Sallu* is clearly common, though *Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah* (v. 7) may be the same as Judah son of Hassenuah (Neh. 11:9 – the difference in Heb. is minimal). For both Judah and Benjamin, a small in numbers since Nehemiah's time seems probably (956 Benjaminites as against 928).

iii. Priests in Jerusalem (9:10-13)

9 The people from Benjamin, as listed in their genealogy, numbered 956. All these men were heads of their families.

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah; Jehoiarib; Jakin;

11 Azariah son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the official in charge of the house of God;

12 Adaiiah son of Jeroham, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah; and Maasai son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer.

13 The priests, who were heads of families, numbered 1,760. They were able men, responsible for ministering in the house of God.

The names of six *heads of families* (v. 13) are given, viz. *Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin* (v. 10), *Azariah* (v. 11), *Adaiiah* (v. 12), and *Maasai* (v. 12; = Amashsai, Neh. 11:13). The first three are old traditional families (cf. 1 Chr. 24:7, 17; Neh. 12:19, 21), and the last two belong to the families of *Pashhur* and *Immer* who, along with *Jedaiah*, were part of the first group to return from Babylon (Ezra 2:36-39 = Neh. 7:39-42). *Azariah* belongs to the Zadokites, the family of high priests, and much the same family tree is given in 1 Chronicles 6:11-14; Ezra 7:1-2 (*Azariah* is probably not the same as the *Seraiah* of Neh. 11:11, since 1 Chr. 6:14, Ezra 7:1 treat them separately). *Official in charge of the house of God* (v. 11) is almost certainly a term for the high priest (cf. 2 Chr. 31:10, 13).

The number of priests has increased substantially over Nehemiah 11:12-14 (1,760 as against 1,192), but they are considerably fewer than the 4,289 who returned initially. As with the rest of the Jews, there seems to have been some reticence among the priests to take up Nehemiah's challenge to repopulate Jerusalem (the family of *Harim*, Ezra 2:39 = Neh. 7:42, for example, does not seem to have participated). Malachi's complaint that not all the priests took their duties seriously seems also to be reflected here (cf. Mal. 1:6 – 2:9). The significant numerical increase in Chronicles' list may be reflected in the double commendation of these priests as *able men* (NIV, RSV 'men of substance,' NEB) who were committed to the 'service' (RSV, NEB) or ministry (cf. NIV) of the temple (v. 13; - note that 'service' is also a key characterization of the priests' task in 1 Chr. 24:3, 19).

iv. Levites in Jerusalem (9:14-16)

14 Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, a Merarite;

15 Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal and Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zicri, the son of Asaph;

16 Obadiah son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun; and Berekiah son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

Seven names are given as against six in Nehemiah 11:15-18, and with some variation. They are probably divided into four leaders, who are given genealogies, viz, *Shemaiah* (v. 14), *Mattaniah* (v. 15b), *Obadiah* and *Berekiah* (v. 16), and three assistants who are without named ancestors (v. 15a). This separation is supported by the designation of Bakbukia (= *Bakhakkari*?) as 'second' (Neh. 11:17). As indicated in Nehemiah 11, these are the musicians, a factor only hinted at here by the derivation of Mattaniah from *Asaph* and Obadiah from *Jeduthun*. Their ancestors were choir leaders in David's day (cf. 6:39; 15:17; 25:2-3), and the leaders in this list led Israel's praise in Nehemiah's time (Neh. 12:8).

Berekiah who is not mentioned in Nehemiah 11, is probably also a musician. The *Netophathites*, who lived near Bethlehem, included many singers (Neh. 12:28-29), and the reference to *Elkanah* may link Berekiah with the Hemanites, whose descendants are not otherwise included among post-exilic musicians (cf. 1 Chr. 6:33-38). Only the Asaphites seem to have returned initially from exile (Ezra 2:41 = Neh. 7:44), so that the presence of other groups here is a testimony to an increasing desire to see the musicians fully re-established in their traditional groups.

v. Gatekeepers in Jerusalem (9:17-32)

- 17 The gatekeepers: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman and their brothers, Shallum their chief
18 being stationed at the King's Gate on the east, up to the present time. These were the gatekeepers belonging to the camp of the Levites.***
- 19 Shallum son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his fellow gatekeepers from his family (the Korahites) were responsible for guarding the thresholds of the Tent just as their fathers had been responsible for guarding the entrance to the dwelling of the Lord.***
- 20 In earlier times Phinehas son of Eleazar was in charge of the gatekeepers, and the Lord was with him.***
- 21 Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was the gatekeeper at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.***
- 22 Altogether, those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds numbered 212. They were registered by genealogy in their villages. The gatekeepers had been assigned to their positions of trust by David and Samuel the seer.***
- 23 They and their descendants were in charge of guarding the gates of the house of the Lord-the house called the Tent.***
- 24 The gatekeepers were on the four sides: east, west, north and south.***
- 25 Their brothers in their villages had to come from time to time and share their duties for seven-day periods.***
- 26 But the four principal gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted with the responsibility for the rooms and treasuries in the house of God.***
- 27 They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning.***
- 28 Some of them were in charge of the articles used in the temple service; they counted them when they were brought in and when they were taken out.***
- 29 Others were assigned to take care of the furnishings and all the other articles of the sanctuary, as well as the flour and wine, and the oil, incense and spices.***
- 30 But some of the priests took care of mixing the spices.***
- 31 A Levite named Mattithiah, the firstborn son of Shallum the Korahite, was entrusted with the responsibility for baking the offering bread.***

32 Some of their Kohathite brothers were in charge of preparing for every Sabbath the bread set out on the table.

“This paragraph marks a substantial addition to the brief note about gatekeepers in Nehemiah 11:19. The Chronicler has also departed somewhat from his theme of listing Jerusalem’s population, and the question arises as to why the gatekeepers have been given as much attention as all the other groups in the list. One not unreasonable possibility is that the gatekeepers exemplified particularly clearly the Chronicler’s desire to see the Levites take a more prominent role. Although they must have been a fairly small group, many seem to have responded to the call to live in Jerusalem and its surrounding villages (vv. 22, 25). They were also a living witness to the Chronicles’ theme of the Israelites’ ‘help’ for one another ..., and they showed a real willingness to take on extra duties (vv. 26-32). This latter situation would have arisen because of the general shortage of Levites in post-exile Israel (cf. Ezra 8:15-20; Neh. 13:10-11).

The section deals with three aspects of the gatekeepers’ ‘service’ or ministry (vv. 19, 28), their authority (vv. 17-23), their leadership (vv. 24:27), and their additional work (vv. 28-32). As often in Chronicles, the quest of authority is settled by an appeal to tradition, both genealogical and spiritual. The four current families (v. 17; only two occur in Neh. 11:19) trace their ancestry through their ‘leader’ (v. 17, GNB) *Shallum* back to *Korah* (vv. 19, 31), the original leader of one of the Kohathite (cf. v. 32) groups of Levites (cf. 6:22, 37). Shallum’s leading role is indicated by his being stationed at the *east* gate, which in the post-exilic period was known as the *King’s Gate* (v. 18; cf. 1 Chr. 26:14). This was an important governmental position, as well as one that involved guarding the very doors of the sanctuary (v. 19).

Their formal institution as gatekeepers was *David’s* task (v. 22; cf. 1 Chr. 26), when *Zechariah son of Meshelemiah* had been in office (v. 21; 1 Chr. 26:2, 14). But just as important was their spiritual heritage, represented here by *Phinehas* the priest (v. 20), who had dramatically defended the holiness of the sanctuary (Num. 25:6ff.), and by *Samuel* (v. 22), who had evidently been a gatekeeper in his youth (1 Sam. 3:15). This appeal to the past is also supported by language reminiscent of the Mosaic period. Both ‘camp’ (vv. 18, RSV; also v. 19) and *Tent* (= Tabernacle, vv. 19, 23) occur twice, and *entrance to the Tent of Meeting* (v. 21) is taken straight from the story of Phinehas (Num. 25:6). The fact that *the LORD was with him* (= Phinehas, v. 20, RSV, NIV) indicates that the Lord was also with those gatekeepers of the Chronicler’s day who followed in the same living tradition of divine service. They had entered into *positions of trust* (v. 22, cf. RSV; also vv. 26, 31), which translates a word also meaning ‘faithfulness, trustworthiness’ (cf. JB, NEB ...).

The main issue in verses 24-32 is whether some or all of these verses refer only to the gatekeepers or to the Levites as a whole. Many commentators prefer the latter view, dividing the section after verse 32 ..., verse 26a ..., or verse 27 (RSV, NIV). The basis for this is the phrase (lit.) ‘They were Levites’ (v. 26b, cf. v. 31), and the extension of duties in verses 26-32. But in fact, the gatekeepers seem to be in the compiler’s mind throughout. Of the four additional roles mentioned, that of ‘treasurer’ (v. 26) was traditionally filled by gatekeepers (1 Chr. 26:15, 17, 20ff.), and that of night-porter (vv. 26-27) is not inappropriate. Certainly, the responsibilities of looking after temple equipment (vv. 28-29a) and preparing the sacrifice (vv. 29b-32) are unexpected, but these jobs too are allocated to gatekeepers and their relatives. *Mattithiah* (v. 31) is the firstborn son of Shallum, the chief gatekeeper (vv. 17, 19), and the *Kohathite brothers* (v. 32) included Shallum’s family, the Korahites. The gatekeepers’ involvement in other activities, especially financial ones, also occurs in 2 Chronicles 31:14-17; 34:8-13.

The *four principal gatekeepers* (vv. 24-27) are presumably those named in verse 17. The temple doors were closed each night, though a *key* (v. 27) is mentioned nowhere else in the Old Testament. The

morning (v. 27) was the time for praise (cf. 1 Chr. 23:30) and sacrifice (e.g. Exod. 29:38-41; Num 28:1-8; 2 Chr. 2:4; Ezra 3:3). Verse 28-29a throughout refer to temple ‘vessels’ (NEB) or ‘equipment’ – there is no separate word for ‘furniture’ (against EVV). Verses 30-32 deal with certain special responsibilities in preparing the sacrifices. *Mixing the spices* (v. 30) remained a priestly prerogative (cf. Exod. 30:22-33), but Shallum’s son baked the regular ‘flat cakes (?)’ (v. 31, NRSV) or *offering bread*, and the gatekeepers’ closest relatives looked after the showbread (v. 32; cf. 23:29; 28:16; 2 Chr. 2:4).”

vi. Musicians in Jerusalem (9:33)

33 Those who were musicians, heads of Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night.

“It is not clear to whom this verse refers. Either it is the same group as in verses 14-16 but occurring in a different source (vv. 17b-33), or these are gatekeepers with musical talents. That some of the musicians in verses 14-16 acted as gatekeepers under Nehemiah perhaps support the latter interpretation, also does the note about exemption from other duties.”

vii. Conclusion (9:34)

34 All these were heads of Levite families, chiefs as listed in their genealogy, and they lived in Jerusalem.

“This verse is almost identical to 8:28, with only *Levite* added. It forms an inclusion with verse 3 by returning the theme of *Jerusalem* residence in the earlier part of the list, though the Levites did not appear until verse 14. Its composite character suggests that it has been adapted from chapter 8.”

d. Genealogy of Saul’s family (9:35-44)

**35 Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah,
36 and his firstborn son was Abdon, followed by Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,
37 Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah and Mikloth.**

38 Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. They too lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.

39 Ner was the father of Kish, Kish the father of Saul, and Saul the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab and Esh-Baal.

40 The son of Jonathan: Merib-Baal, who was the father of Micah.

41 The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea and Ahaz.

42 Ahaz was the father of Judah, Judah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth and Zimri, and Zimri was the father of Moza.

43 Moza was the father of Binea; Rephaiah was his son, Eleasah his son and Azel his son.

44 Azel had six sons, and these were their names: Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

“This list is almost identical to 8:29-40, except that 8:39-40 are not repeated. ... The reason for the list’s reappearance seems to lie in its different function. Whereas in chapter 8 the emphasis was on the place of residence of three main Benjaminite families, here Saul’s genealogy anticipates the account of his kingship in chapter 10. The Chronicler’s practice of prefacing narrative passages with appropriate lists throws up a fascinating contrast here with the downfall of Saul’s dynasty (10:6). Since the

genealogy continues for twelve generations after Saul, the fact that his dynasty crashed and his kingship was transferred to David did not remove his family's place in Israelite history. They too had lived in Jerusalem (v. 38), and though we do not know whether this continued after the exile, even for them there were signs of hope."

Here ends the lengthy quotation from *The Tyndale Commentary*!

2. THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON (1 Chr. 10:1 – 2 Chr. 9:51)

a. Transferring the kingdom to David (10:1 – 12:40)

i. The end of Saul's house (10:1-14)

a. Saul's death (10:1-5)

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

2 The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua.

3 The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him.

4 Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

5 When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died.

Here begins the real history of Israel as a kingdom. Interestingly it begins with the end of the first king's reign, that is with the death of Saul.

The question as to whether Israel was supposed to remain a theocracy indefinitely is an important one. In the time of the judges, the crown had been offered to Gideon after his momentous victory over the Midianites. But Gideon refused, saying: "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you."⁷ Yet, there was in the Mosaic law a place for kingship.⁸ The main issue was that the king would be the man of God's choice.

But when the Israelites came to the point where they wanted to become a kingdom, God seemed to be against it. The issue was not the choice of a king but the fact that the people of God wanted to become a secular nation. They did not want a king who ruled by the grace of God, but one who would rule instead of God. God said to Samuel: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."⁹ Saul was that kind of king. Although, initially, he was shy and did not aspire to become the ruler of the nation, he became a monarch who did not consider himself to be responsible to God for the way he reigned. The final judgment over Saul as king was that he "was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord." The turning point in Saul's life was when he did not wait for the Lord and acted before Samuel came to reveal God's will to him in the war with the Philistines. He took it upon himself to bring the sacrifice that Samuel was supposed to bring. Saul's sin was that he did not wait upon the Lord. Samuel said to him: "You acted

⁷ Judg. 8:23

⁸ See Deut. 17:14-20.

⁹ I Sam. 8:7

foolishly ... You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command."¹⁰ Saul's greatest sin was probably that he consulted a medium and thus allowed Satan to enter his life. That is what brought him to the point where he committed suicide.

b. The end of Saul's house (10:6-7)

6 So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.

7 When all the Israelites in the valley saw that the army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "The brevity of Chronicles' account of Saul has been a long-standing enigma. Practically the entire earlier record of Saul's reign (1 Sam. 8 – 2 Sam. 1) is omitted, with only his final defeat and death being included here. It is apparently assumed that readers will be familiar with the other events of his reign. Similarly, the account of David begins very abruptly with David's inauguration as king over all Israel (11:1-3). The detailed narratives of David's rise to power in 1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 4 are left out, even though 2 Samuel records important events such as David's private anointing by Samuel, his disturbing and extended conflict with Saul, and his seven-and-a-half year reign over Judah (a brief mention of the latter is found in 1 Chr. 3:4; 29:27). Again, however, the reader's knowledge of many of the events in David's earlier life is assumed, as shown by several allusions in 11:10 – 12:37.

By deliberately omitting so much of this material from 1 and 2 Samuel, Chronicles is able to concentrate on two aspects of the kingdom in chapters 10 – 12. In chapter 10, kingship in Israel is transferred from Saul's house to David's (vv. 13-14), with further references to the importance of this changeover in 11:1-2, 12:23. The second feature, found in chapters 11 – 12, traces the gradual expansion of David's kingdom to include 'all Israel' (11:1-3; 12:38-40), repeatedly emphasizing how support was transferred from Saul's former subjects to the new king. In this way, chapters 10 – 12 serve as an introduction to the United Monarchy under David and Solomon, but also as a challenge to the Chronicler's contemporaries about the true nature of kingship and authority in Israel. The Chronicler gives no direct advice about the practical implications of this material for his own time, and certainly issues no invitation to rebellion against Persian (or Greek) emperors. He is simply content to indicate that the kingdom of Israel transferred from Saul to David was part of God's own kingdom."

In asking his armor bearer to kill him, Saul says that he is afraid the Philistines would "abuse" him if they found him wounded. The Hebrew verb used is *'alal*, which can be rendered "to maltreat." We find it used in God's reference to the plagues of Egypt, when He says to the Israelites: "You may tell your children and grandchildren how I *dealt harshly* with the Egyptians."¹¹ Saul's armor bearer was afraid to kill Saul, probably thinking he could be accused of regicide. It is not clear how Saul committed suicide. We read that he used his own sword and fell on it. But it is difficult to imagine how one can do that. He must have planted the sword solidly in the ground and then thrown himself upon it. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: "Saul probably feared not the abuse of mocking only, but that of torture."

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Saul's final defeat at *Mount Gilboa* took place on the south-east side of the Esdraelon plain at a crossroads linking the southern and northern tribes. The battle

¹⁰ 1 Sam. 13:13, 14

¹¹ Ex. 10:2

strategy is unclear, but there is little doubt that Saul's desperation and fear (1 Sam. 28:4-5) drove him into a disadvantageous position. The Philistines could use their chariots to maximum benefit on the plain, and count on support from the local Canaanite city-states. There is tragic irony in Saul's catastrophe at the hands of an enemy he had been chosen by God and people to overcome (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1 LXX) and over whom he had already enjoyed partial success (1 Sam. 13 – 14)."

One of the great tragedies in this battle was that not only Saul died, but that Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua were killed in the same war. That, apparently, left Israel without anyone to inherit the throne. It was, however, God's way of preparing for David's ascension.

Chronicles does not mention the fact that one of Saul's sons, Ish-Bosheth, was still alive. Saul's general, Abner, took Ish-Bosheth and made him king over Israel with the exception of the tribe of Judah.¹² The intent of the author is to lead to the ascent of David.

Saul's suicide and the death of his sons brought the whole nation to a state of panic. The way the story reads is as if all of Israel was lost to the Philistines. That was obviously not the case. *The Tyndale Commentary* states: "1 Samuel 31:7 suggests that part of the Jordan valley as well as Jezreel was lost to the Philistines. The fact that the capital of Ishbaal's short-lived kingdom was at Mahanaim in Transjordan seems to confirm this (2 Sam. 2:8-9). Saul had lost more land to the *Philistines* in the end than he had gained from them, making a mockery of the original hopes for the monarchy (1 Sam. 8:20)."

c. Saul's corpse (10:8-10)

8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

9 They stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news among their idols and their people.

10 They put his armor in the temple of their gods and hung up his head in the temple of Dagon.

The day after the battle, the Philistines came to the battle field and found the corpses of Saul and his sons. This seems to indicate that, up to that point, the Philistines had not known that Saul was dead. We don't read that they did anything with the bodies of the sons, but they decapitated Saul's dead body, took his armor, and probably his clothes, and started a victory celebration.

The Chronicler's mention of Dagon's temple, where Saul's head ended up, is an indication of the spiritual implications of Saul's unfaithfulness to the God of Israel. The Philistines must have believed that their victory over Israel was an indication of their idol's superiority over the Yahweh.

The Tyndale Commentary states about Dagon: "Particularly interesting are the specific references to Saul's head and Dagon's temple (the god's name is not in 1 Sam. 31:10), which have been plausibly explained as a deliberate contrast with Dagon's fall before the ark (1 Sam. 5:1-4) and Goliath's fall before David, underlining the irony as well as the extent of Saul's failure (1 Sam. 17:54). Both, like Saul, lost their heads. Dagon was widely worshipped in northern Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine from the third millennium BC onward. He may have been a vegetation deity and is associated exclusively with the Philistines in the Old Testament."

d. Saul's burial (10:11-12)

11 When all the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard of everything the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹² II Sam. 2:8-10

12 all their valiant men went and took the bodies of Saul and his sons and brought them to Jabesh. Then they buried their bones under the great tree in Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.

The people of Jabesh had never forgotten Saul's first important act at the beginning of his reign. Jabesh had been besieged by the Ammonites and King Nahash had stated that he would accept their surrender only if he could gouge out the right eye of every male in the city. Saul had delivered them forty years earlier.¹³ The people of Jabesh were the only part of Israel's population who honored their king in his death. Israel was probably too much in disarray after their defeat by the Philistines to pay attention to Saul's death and honor him with a decent burial.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "This is the only place where 'Jabesh' is used as an abbreviation for Jabesh-gilead, of which it was the chief city. Gilead comprised the lots of Reuben and Gad (... Numbers 32:1-5, 25-32, 39-41) and of half Manasseh (... 1 Chronicles 27:21). Saul had on a celebrated occasion (... 1 Samuel 11:1-13) befriended the people of Jabesh-gilead, coming to their rescue against Nahath the Ammonite, of which kindness they are now mindful, show that rarest of virtues, gratitude to a fallen monarch, and are further on (... 2 Samuel 2:5) commended for it by David. This verse does not tell us, as the parallel (... 1 Samuel 31:12) does, of the first burning of the bodies, and then of the burying of the calcite bones. The silence is very remarkable. It does name the kind of tree, the 'oak' or 'terebinth.'"

Although the Bible's consensus about Saul's person and reign is unfavorable, there are indications that Saul was not completely out of everyone's favor. Even David held Saul in high esteem, always honoring him as the one who had been anointed by God.

Saul had come under the power of evil spirits. That brought him ultimately to his suicide. At the critical moment, Saul ought to have known that "Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death."¹⁴ Satan had prevented him from realizing this.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "The omission of any reference here to burning Saul's disfigured corpse is probably to avoid associating him with criminal activity (cf. Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:25). Together with the burial and seven-day fast (cf. 2 Sam. 1:12; Ps. 35:4), this is an important element in modifying the otherwise unfavorable presentation of Saul (further 21:12-14). The replacement of the rare term 'tamarisk' (1 Sam. 31:13; elsewhere only in 1 Sam. 22:6) by the commoner (generic?) word 'oak' (v. 12, REV, NEB, NRSV, RSV) is a good example of Chronicles' habit of simplifying rare or obscure words."

e. The transfer of Saul's kingdom (10:13-14)

13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance,

14 and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "A unique theological assessment of Saul. Three reasons are given for Saul's failure: he was *unfaithful* to God, disregarded his *word*, and failed to *seek* (RSV, etc.) him properly. The first and third phrases are typical of Chronicles, and are often associated with divine judgment (on unfaithfulness, cf. e.g. 1 Chr. 2:7; 9:1; 2 Chr. 12:2; 36:14; on not seeking God, cf. e.g. 2

¹³ 1 Sam. 11:1-11

¹⁴ Ps. 68:20

Chr. 12:14; 15:13). The second is more common in Deuteronomy, and occurs elsewhere in Chronicles only in 2 Chronicles 34:21. Together, they form a comprehensive indictment of Saul's attitude to God, and are seen in typical biblical fashion as the real reason lying behind his political and military failures. These theological explanations can be interpreted in two ways. Some have seen them as exhibiting a pattern which culminated in the judgment of exile, contrasting Saul's reign with that of David ... Alternatively and more convincingly, they refer to specific incidents in Saul's life, as demonstrated by explicit mention of consulting the medium at Endor (1 Sam. 28). This view is also supported by reference to specific words from the Lord which Saul rejected, and which repeatedly mention the transfer of Saul's kingdom to David (1 Sam. 13:13; 15:22-23, 26; 28:16-19). These phrases therefore confirm that the main purpose of this chapter is to show how and why the kingdom was transferred from Saul to David. Verse 14a does not contradict 1 Samuel 28:6, but rather illustrates the spiritual truth that God can be sought either single-heartedly or not at all (cf. 1 Chr. 16:11; Ps. 27:4; Matt. 6:33). Saul's syncretism is a microcosm of Israel's unfaithfulness in the Old Testament. It is also a contradiction of 'the first and greatest commandment' (Matt. 22:37-38; Deut. 6:5)."

ii. All Israel recognizes David as king (11:1 – 12:40)

a. David anointed king over all Israel at Hebron (11:1-3)

1 All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood.

2 In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord your God said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

3 When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the Lord had promised through Samuel.

The author of Chronicles skips the first and partial part of David's reign over the tribe of Judah at Hebron and goes directly to his coronation as king over all Israel. There is also no mention of the civil war between the tribes following Saul's son, Ishbosheth and those on David's side. On Ishbosheth's side general Abner played an important role. It was a situation in which the army had more power than the crown. It wasn't until Abner went to David and offered him the crown over all of Israel that David became what the Chronicler describes here.

The words "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler'" are a literal quotation from Second Samuel.¹⁵

It is interesting to observe that, although all of Israel, including Abner, knew the prophecy about David becoming their king, they only followed the Word of God when their own plans failed. The Chronicler wisely passes over this part of history. Evidently, he wrote when the crown had been in the house of David for several generations. To mention that the kingdom had been taken away from Israel's first royal family would probably have stirred up a hornet's nest.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Chapters 11 – 12 are a single unit with a clear design. The programmatic theme of David's recognition as king by the whole of Israel introduces (11:1-3) and concludes (12:23-40) the whole unit. Significantly, the conclusion to the whole account of David's reign

¹⁵ II Sam. 5:1, 2

has an identical emphasis (1 Chr. 29:25-26), and parallels the opening here. The intervening verses (11:4 – 12:37) develop the basic theme. They reveal David’s widespread support, even from those tribes most distant geographically from Judah and those who formerly owed allegiance to Saul.

The emphasis on Israel’s unity under David must have had considerable implications for post-exilic Israel. ... Although Chronicles reports several attempts at reunification during the Divided Monarchy period (e.g. 2 Chr. 30:1-12), no other passage expresses so clearly that the open commitment of previously separated groups to God’s appointed leader was a vital ingredient in making that unity possible. Though the Chronicler’s hope remained unfulfilled in his own day, it did become a real possibility in Christ. Those Jews and Samaritans who first put their faith in Jesus (John 4:4-42; Acts 8:4-25) began a reunifying process which is still moving towards its climax. It was accelerated when 3,000 ‘Jews from every nation under heaven’ (Acts 2:5) were joined by Gentiles from many nations in acknowledging the risen Son of David as God’s appointed leader. It remains the church’s privilege and task to break down human barriers and to work towards the final gathering of a ‘great multitude ... from every nation, tribe, people and language’ to Jesus as ‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS’ (Rev. 7:0; 19:16). Only then will Chronicles’ hope for the Davidic kingship be fully and finally transformed.”

Although the above comment puts the passage in a clear and acceptable perspective, it must be noted that, in Jesus’ day Samaria was no longer populated by people of Jewish descent. The Samaritans were transmigrates from other parts of the Assyrian Empire. We read: “The king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in towns of the Medes,”¹⁶ and: “The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns.”¹⁷

The elders of Israel went to Hebron and offered the kingdom to David. We read that he made “a compact” with them. The Hebrew word used is *beriyth*. The literal meaning of the word is “to cut up.” The same word is used for the covenant God made with Abraham. There was a particular ritual that accompanied that kind of agreement. One or more animals were killed and cut up in parts. The two parties that made the covenant would walk between those parts, indicating that if they would not carry out the stipulations of the agreement, they would become like the animals that were cut in pieces. In the case of God’s covenant with Abraham, Abraham brought a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon and cut them up in pieces. But only God passed between the pieces, indicating that the covenant was one-sided.

Whether this ritual was followed in part or completely is not stated in our text. But it is likely that the agreement was accompanied by a sacrifice.

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “*They anointed David.* The first time of David’s being anointed (1 Samuel 16:1, 13) Samuel the prophet officiated. The second time (... 2 Samuel 2:4) was when the ‘men of Judah’ anointed him king over ‘the house of Judah.’ This third time when David was anointed king over the united people, it was at all events at the special instance of ‘all the elders of Israel,’ although who officiated on these two last occasions is not mentioned. *According to the word of the Lord by Samuel.* The sentence marks the complete fulfillment of what had been foreshadowed in ... 1 Samuel 16:12, 13; and it may probably have been the more carefully introduced by the compiler of Chronicles, in consideration of the absence from his own work of previous details and of the previous anointings of David.”

¹⁶ II Kings 18:11

¹⁷ II Kings 17:24

b. David's capital city (11:4-9)

4 David and all the Israelites marched to Jerusalem (that is, Jebus). The Jebusites who lived there 5 said to David, "You will not get in here." Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.

6 David had said, "Whoever leads the attack on the Jebusites will become commander-in-chief." Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, and so he received the command.

7 David then took up residence in the fortress, and so it was called the City of David.

8 He built up the city around it, from the supporting terraces to the surrounding wall, while Joab restored the rest of the city.

9 And David became more and more powerful, because the Lord Almighty was with him.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "The conquest of the Canaanite fortress *Jebus* and its subsequent transformation into *Jerusalem*, the *City of David* and the *de facto* capital of the Israelite tribes, are presented here as the first major result of David's anointing. Earlier attempts to hold Jerusalem had been only partially successful (cf. Josh. 10:1-28; Judg. 1:8; 19:11-12). *Jebus* was a local name known only from the Old Testament – the name Jerusalem seems to be as old as the nineteenth century BC in the light of its probable mention in the Execration Texts from Egypt. In the post-exilic era, the Chronicler's emphasis on Jerusalem's Davidic origins (absent from Ezra-Neh.) would have underlined the city's significance for his contemporaries despite repeated hostility against the city (cf. Ezra 4:1 – 5:17; Neh. 4:1-23; 6:1-14). David's success was attributed (with 2 Sam. 5:10) to Yahweh, who, having called David to kingship, did not abandon him to the task he remained *with him* (v. 9)."

Jerusalem is the name that came about when the two cities of Jebus and Salem combined. The literal meaning of Jerusalem is "foundation of peace."

David must have recognized the strategic importance of the place. He believed Jerusalem to be thus situated that it would promote the unity of the tribes if the central government was established there.

It is amazing that the Jebusites had been able to keep Israel at bay for such a long time. *The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states: "The city of Jerusalem is mentioned directly in the Bible for the first time during the struggle of Joshua and the Israelites to take the land of Canaan (Josh 10:1-4). Their efforts to take the city were unsuccessful, although the areas surrounding the city were taken and the land was given to the tribe of Judah. Still remaining in the fortress of the city itself were the Jebusites. Thus, the city was called Jebus."

The capture of Jerusalem was achieved by Joab. According to David's promise, this made Joab the commander of Israel's army. Joab was David's nephew, the son of Zeruiah, David's sister. Joab was a ruthless and unscrupulous character. He was very dedicated to David, but his callousness made him undesirable to David. Yet, David found himself unable to relieve Joab of his command. The fact that Joab helped David hide the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, gave Joab an unassailable position. If David had dismissed Joab he would probably have lost the support of the army.

When David was on his deathbed he turned the responsibility of punishing Joab over to Solomon, saying: "Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me — what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist

and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.”¹⁸

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the capture of Jerusalem and Joab’s role in it: “The details of Jerusalem’s capture differ noticeably from 2 Samuel 5:6-10, though the origins of the variations are not always clear. David’s personal army is now called *all the Israelites* (v. 4), a change in line with one of Chronicles’ favorite themes which here is probably based on the varied tribal background of David’s supporters The rather obscure report of the city’s capture in 2 Samuel is largely replaced in verses 5-6 by an explanation of Joab’s promotion to *commander-in-chief*. Chronicles’ interest in *Joab* (his construction activity, v. 8, is unparalleled in 2 Sam.), though often regarded as problematic, is explained by his position as the chief of David’s supporters (v. 10). Joab is described as a ‘chief’ (RSV) just like the ‘head’ (EVV ‘chiefs’ v. 10) of the mighty men, though he is clearly singled out from the others (e.g. the Heb. root *r’s*, ‘head,’ occurs four times in v. 6). The note on his military and building achievements (vv. 6, 8) should therefore be understood in the same way as the notes on other leading soldiers in verses 11-25.”

The mention that David “took up residence in the fortress” suggests that Chronicles’ readers are supposed to be familiar with the layout of the city. Elsewhere the place is called Zion. The fact that David made his headquarters at that place would give it the name “city of David.”

We gather from David’s and Joab’s activities that most of Jerusalem was destroyed during the battle in which it was captured. David “built up” and Joab “restored the rest of the city.”

David realized that his increase in power and popularity was God’s doing. This is more elaborated in Second Samuel, where we read that David also caught international attention. We are told: “And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him. Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David. And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.”¹⁹

c. David’s mighty men (11:10-47)

10 These were the chiefs of David's mighty men — they, together with all Israel, gave his kingship strong support to extend it over the whole land, as the Lord had promised—

11 this is the list of David's mighty men: Jashobeam, a Hacmonite, was chief of the officers; he raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.

12 Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men.

13 He was with David at Pas Dammim when the Philistines gathered there for battle. At a place where there was a field full of barley, the troops fled from the Philistines.

14 But they took their stand in the middle of the field. They defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the Lord brought about a great victory.

15 Three of the thirty chiefs came down to David to the rock at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

16 At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem.

17 David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

¹⁸ I Kings 2:5, 6

¹⁹ II Sam. 5:10-12

18 So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the Lord.

19 "God forbid that I should do this!" he said. "Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives?" Because they risked their lives to bring it back, David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men.

20 Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three.

21 He was doubly honored above the Three and became their commander, even though he was not included among them.

22 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.

23 And he struck down an Egyptian who was seven and a half feet tall. Although the Egyptian had a spear like a weaver's rod in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.

24 Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men.

25 He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

26 The mighty men were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem,

27 Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite,

28 Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, Abiezer from Anathoth,

29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite,

30 Maharai the Netophathite, Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite,

31 Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite,

32 Hurai from the ravines of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,

33 Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite,

34 the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite,

35 Ahiam son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphai son of Ur,

36 Hopher the Mekerathite, Ahijah the Pelonite,

37 Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai son of Ezbai,

38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar son of Hagri,

39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah,

40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,

41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad son of Ahlai,

42 Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, who was chief of the Reubenites, and the thirty with him,

43 Hanan son of Maacah, Joshaphat the Mithnite,

44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite,

45 Jediel son of Shimri, his brother Joha the Tizite,

46 Eliel the Mahavite, Jeribai and Joshaviah the sons of Elnaam, Ithmah the Moabite,

47 Eliel, Obed and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

The Tyndale Commentary comments on this list: "The lists of David's mighty men in 2 Samuel 23:8-39 are expanded (vv. 41b-47) and given a totally new context. They are provided with a significant new introduction (v. 10), which resumes three themes already highlighted in verses 1-3 (David's kingship, all Israel and the word of God), as well as adding a fourth, that of *strong support* (cf. 2 Chr. 16:9, 21:4). The warriors come from various tribal backgrounds. This explains the Chronicler's

inclusion of *all Israel* (v. 10), and is a further illustration of his overall theme of Israel's unity under David. Not all these men necessarily came to Hebron (cf. vv 1-3), since the lists are probably composite. *Asahel*, in fact, died while David was still only king of Judah (v. 26; cf. 2 Sam. 2:18-23). The Chronicler's material, like much Old Testament narrative, is often not arranged chronologically, and his persistent attention to detail elsewhere suggests that he was not unaware that the personalities and events in this passage belonged to different periods in David's life. Strengthening David's kingdom was not achieved overnight.

The 'word of the LORD' (v. 10, RSV; *the LORD had promised*, NIV) is to be understood as a summary statement The most important of David's soldiers (EVV 'might men') are divided into the Three (vv. 18, 20-21, 25) and the Thirty (v. 25), though the distinction between the two groups is not very clear. The inclusion of these names is primarily to magnify David who, as God's anointed, received loyal service from men of great skill and heroism. Since most of those mentioned in verses 11-31 reappear as commanders of the monthly levies (1 Chr. 27:1-15), it is probable that the whole list contains the names of Israel's recognized leaders. Certainly, 'Thirty' is not to be understood in precise numerical terms, as the lists demonstrate, and either is a rather elastic number, or refers to a special kind of military leader. The word 'Thirty' may in fact mean an officer of some kind, either an 'officer of the third rank' or a member of a special three-man squad directly responsible to the king. The group's numbers must have fluctuated, as is sadly indicated by the mention of *Uriah the Hittite* (v. 41; cf. 2 Sam. 11:17), though one should recall that numerical titles in military units often do not coincide with the actual practice (e.g. the Roman centurion hardly ever commanded 100 men, and the Roman legion was usually much smaller than the theoretically standard 600 men). Two leaders of the 'Thirty,' not included in chapter 11, are also mentioned in 12:4, 18. ...

Verses 11-47 can be divided into several groups of names.

(a) *Jashobeam* and *Eleazar* (vv. 11-14), to whom 'Shammah' should almost certainly be added (cf. 2 Sam. 23:11-12). Nearly all commentators accept that 2 Samuel 23:9b-11a has been omitted in the middle of verse 13 by a copyist's error, possibly influenced by Shammah's non-appearance in the similar list of army commanders in 1 Chronicles 27 (cf. vv. 2, 4). This trio are all characterized by their heroism against the Philistines, through which on at least one occasion *the LORD brought about a great victory* (v. 14; cf. 2 Sam. 23:10, 12).

(b) An anonymous group (vv. 15-19), who have been identified with either the preceding (vv. 11-14), or the following names (v. 20-25). The point of David's pouring Bethlehem's precious *water* on the ground is threefold. It highlights a great act of Israelite bravery, it exalts David's ability to inspire extraordinary loyalty, and it was recognized as an act of worship (vv. 18 – not *before the LORD*, as NIV, but 'to the LORD' as NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB, GNB cf. 1 Sam. 7:6).

(c) The third group may also be a trio, including *Asahel* (v. 26) as well as *Abishai* his brother and *Benaiah* (vv. 20-25). *Abishai* and *Benaiah* are mentioned for their *great exploits* (v. 22), but neither apparently attained to the Three (vv. 21, 25). The 'ariels' (RSV; lit. 'lions of God') of verse 22 could be either 'lions' ... or 'champions' (REB, NEB; cf. 'lionlike men,' AV).

(d) *The mighty men* (vv. 26-47). The list is longer than that in 2 Samuel 23 (that list ends at *Uriah the Hittite*, v. 41a here), which is one possible reason for omitting 'The Thirty' from the title (2 Sam. 23:24) and the concluding total (2 Sam. 23:39). It seems to proceed in some sort of geographical order. Most of the first ten names from *Elhanan* to *Heled* (vv. 26-30) originated from Judah, several in verses 31-37 are from northern communities, and men of non-Israelite origin are listed in vv. 38-41a. The addition of verses 41b-47 is couched in a slightly different style from vv. 26-41a, and probably comes from a separate source. These extra names, several of which have Trans-jordanian connections,

are a testimony to fluidity in the size of the group. They may be later replacements, or even assistants to some of those listed earlier (cf. the reference to Joab's *armor-bearer*, v. 39)."

The Adam Clarke's Commentary states about this long list: "The Targum has a remarkable addition here.

'These are the numbers of the strong men who were with David; he was the potent chief of the army; he sat upon the throne of judgment, anointed with the holy oil, all the prophets and wise men standing about him. When he went to battle, he was assisted from on high; and when he sat down to teach the law, the true meaning arose up in his mind. He was elect and pleasant, of a beautiful mien and lovely countenance, exercised in wisdom, prudent in counsel and strong in virtue; the prince of the assembly, of a melodious voice, master in hymns, and chief among the mighty. He was instructed in the use of martial weapons; he carried a spear, to which was appended the ensign of the host of Judah; he went forth according to the voice of the Holy Spirit, was victorious in battle, and overthrew with his spear three hundred men at one time.'"

Verses 16-19 give an interesting account of an incident that reveals David's homesickness. In an obviously unguarded moment David exclaimed: "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"²⁰ The story is copied from Second Samuel.²¹ It is doubtful that there was much difference in taste between water from the well in Bethlehem and water from any other well. David not only thought of Bethlehem but he longed back for his younger years. In refusing to drink the water, but pouring it out before the Lord, David expressed to believe that people are more important than things. He also showed that love is more important than personal satisfaction and that God is more than any of our desires.

The time when this happened was, evidently, when David was hiding from Saul, who was after him to kill him.

The incident also speaks of David's qualities in leadership. If a person is able to raise such dedication in the people he works with it shows outstanding character. David's three heroes demonstrated that they were willing to give their life for David. In a way the story is a vignette of what our dedication to Jesus Christ ought to be like.

David recognized that these men literally risked their lives. Therefore he identified the water they brought to him with their soul and he says that drinking the water would be like drinking their blood. David knew that God had said: "The life of a creature is in the blood."²²

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: "This chivalrous, act evinces the enthusiastic devotion of David's men, that they were ready to gratify his smallest wish at the risk of their lives."

The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary states: "As their blood and soul are used synonymously (the blood as seat of and container of the soul, and the soul as floating in the blood), so here David, according to our account of his words, compares the water, which those heroes had brought for the price of their souls, to the souls of the men, and the drinking of the water to the drinking of their souls, and finally the souls to the blood, in order to express his abhorrence of such a draught. The meaning therefore may be thus expressed: 'Shall I drink in this water the souls, and so the blood, of these men; for they have brought the water even for the price of their souls?'"

The names of the three men who thus risked their lives for David are not mentioned, with the probable exception of Abishai. But that is not clear.

²¹ II Samuel 23:15-17

²² Lev. 17:11

The Fausset's Bible Dictionary writes about Abishai: "Nephew of David by his sister Zeruah; brother of Joab and Asahel. Joab was more of the experienced general, Abishai the devoted champion for David. Thus, when David proposed to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai the perilous visit to Saul's camp, Abishai instantly volunteered, reckless of personal danger. His impulsive nature needed occasional checking, in his zeal for David. We find the consistency of character maintained throughout the history; the same spirit prompting the request at Hachilah, 'Let me smite Saul' (1 Sam 26:8), as subsequently at Bahurim, when Shimei cursed David, prompted his exclamation 'Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the king? Let me take off his head' (2 Sam 16:9). He commanded one third of David's army at the battle with Absalom (2 Sam 18), and rescued David when waxing faint and in imminent peril from the giant Ishbi-benob (2 Sam 21:15-17). ... Once he withstood 300 and slew them with his spear. In 2 Sam 8:13 the victory over the 15,000 Edomites or Syrians in the Valley of Salt is ascribed to David; in 1 Chron 18:12, to Abishai. Probably the commander in chief was David, but the victory actually gained by Abishai."

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "The third group may also be a trio including *Asahel* (v. 26) as well as *Abishai* his brother and *Benaiah* (vv. 20-25). Abishai and Benaiah are mentioned for their *great exploits* (22), but neither apparently attained to the Three (vv. 21, 25). The 'ariels' (RSV; lit. 'lions of God') of verse 22 could be either 'lions' ... or 'champions' (NEB, NEB; cf. 'lionlike men,' AV).

About vv. 26-47, the same commentary states: "The list is longer than that in 2 Samuel 23 (that list ends at *Uriah the Hittite*, v. 41a here), which is one possible reason for omitting 'The Thirty' from the title (2 Sam. 23:24) and the concluding total (2 Sam. 23:39). It seems to proceed in some sort of geographical order. Most of the first ten names from *Elhanan* to *Heled* (vv. 26-30) originated from Judah, several in verses 31-37 are from northern communities, and men of non-Israelite origin are listed in vv. 38-41a. The addition of verses 41b-47 is couched in a slightly different style from vv. 26-41a, and probably comes from a separate source. These extra names, several of which have Transjordanian connections, are a testimony to fluidity in size of the group. They might be later replacements, or even assistants to some of those listed earlier (cf. the reference to Joab's *armor-bearer*, v. 39)."

d. Tribal support at Ziklag: the Benjaminites (12:1-7)

1 *These were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish (they were among the warriors who helped him in battle;*

2 *they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed; they were kinsmen of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin):*

3 *Ahiezzer their chief and Joash the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, Jehu the Anathothite,*

4 *and Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the Thirty, who was a leader of the Thirty; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad the Gederathite,*

5 *Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah and Shephatiah the Haruphite;*

6 *Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer and Jashobeam the Korahites;*

7 *and Joelah and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham from Gedor.*

The Pulpit Commentary states about the whole of chapter 12: "This chapter is retrospective, and the contents of it are not found elsewhere. It is occupied, first (vers. 1-22), with the names and some accounts of those who had come to the help of David in three great crises in time past, to join themselves to him and his cause. And afterwards (vers. 23-40), with an enumeration of those representatives from the tribes who came (... 1 Chronicles 11:1, 3) to support the proceedings of the

occasion when he was being made king of the whole people. Thus the chapter would divide really into four parts, to which the following sections will be found sufficiently to answer: viz. vers. 1-7; 8-18; 19-22; 23-40.”

Barnes' Notes states: “This chapter is composed wholly of matter that is new to us, no corresponding accounts occurring in Samuel. It comprises four lists:

- (1) One of men, chiefly Benjamites, who joined David at Ziklag (1 Chron 12:1-7);
- (2) A second of Gadites who united themselves to him when he was in a stronghold near the desert (1 Chron 12:8-15);
- (3) A third of Manassites who came to him when he was dismissed by the Philistines upon suspicion (1 Chron 12:19-22); and
- (4) A fourth of the numbers from the different tribes who attended and made him king at Hebron (1 Chron 12:23-40).”

The reference here is to the time when David hid from Saul in Philistine country. He went to King Achish and asked for asylum. David had been the commander-in-chief of Saul's army. When he fled the country a group of his soldiers joined him at Gath. They were some of the most outstanding members of Israel's armed forces, able to sling stones and shoot arrows with both hands. We read elsewhere about the men of Benjamin: “Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.”²³ LXX renders the Hebrew word “not miss” with the Greek verb *hamartano*, from which “to sin” is derived in the New Testament.

The Tyndale Commentary comments on David's stay in Ziklag: “David's stay in *Ziklag*, to which verses 19-22 also relate, belongs to his sixteen-month period with the Philistines (see 1 Sam. 27 – 2 Sam. 1). David's retinue is swelled by twenty-three experienced and well armed soldiers from Saul's own tribe, the Benjaminites (cf. also vv. 16, 29), though others from the same tribe remained loyal to Saul's house even after Saul's death (v. 29 and 2 Sam. 2:15, 25). *Ishmaiah's* admission to the Thirty ... is an indication of David's trust in a former opponent (v. 4).”

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary observes about “Ishmaiah the Gibeonite”: “The mention of ‘the Gederathite,’ probably from Gaderah (Josh 15:36), in the lowlands of Judah; of the Korhites (1 Chron 12:6), from Korah (1 Chron 2:43), and of Gedor (1 Chron 12:7), a town in Judah, to the southwest of Bethlehem (cf. 1 Chron 4:4), shows that this first list contains men of Judah as well as Benjamin.”

We learn about a group called “the Thirty.” The Hebrew word is *shelowshiyim*, which may not necessarily refer to a definite number. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “The expression, ‘among the thirty, and over the thirty,’ may possibly mean that, from distinction as one of them, he was promoted above them to be leader of them.”

Shephatiah is called “the Haruphite.” Whether this refers to a clan or a family is uncertain. The literal meaning of the word is “slender.” It may have been a nickname.

Some of the men are identified by their clan, others by the area from which they came, like Gedor, a city in Judah, between Jerusalem and Hebron.

e. Tribal support at the stronghold: the Gadites (12:8-15)

²³ Judg. 20:16

8 Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the desert. They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains.

9 Ezer was the chief, Obadiah the second in command, Eliab the third,

10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth,

11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh,

12 Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth,

13 Jeremiah the tenth and Macbannai the eleventh.

14 These Gadites were army commanders; the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest for a thousand.

15 It was they who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks, and they put to flight everyone living in the valleys, to the east and to the west.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “With verses 16-18, this section refers to David’s earlier period of persecution by Saul. The *stronghold* could be either Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1) or Engedi (1 Sam. 23:29; 24:1), though David used a number of similar places (1 Sam. 23:14). David is here joined by eleven officers (vv. 9-14a) from Gad, a Transjordanian tribe in Southern Gilead, who are characterized by strength and bravery (vv. 8, 15).”

The Matthew Henry’s Commentary comments: “Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of David’s title to the government, and fitness for it, that they separated themselves from their brethren (a laudable separation it was) to go to David, though he was in the hold in the wilderness (v. 8), probably some of his strong holds in the wilderness of Engedi. They were but few, eleven in all, here named, but they added much to David’s strength. Those that had hitherto come in to his assistance were most of them men of broken fortunes, distressed, discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to him rather for protection than to do him any service, 1 Sam 22:2. But these Gadites were brave men, men of war, and fit for the battle, v. 8. For, 1. They were able-bodied men, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon, the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces. In this they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains, so that no man could escape from them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them. 2. They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons. 3. They were officers of the militia in their own tribe (v. 14), so that though they did not bring soldiers with them they had them at command, hundreds, thousands. 4. They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties. Upon some expedition or other, perhaps this to David, they swam over the Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, v. 15. Those are fit to be employed in the cause of God that can venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection. 5. They were men that would go through with the business they engaged in. What enemies those were that they met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, does not appear; but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both towards the east and towards the west; which way so ever they turned, they followed their blow, and did not do their work by halves.”

The description of these Gadites is very picturesque. Their faces were like lions and they handled the mountain slopes like gazelles. Like the lion, the king of beasts, these men showed dignity and strength. The comparison with the gazelle refers to the speed with which they moved. *The Tyndale Commentary* furthermore states: “Verse 14 is probably a reference to their leadership qualities (as NRSV and the VSS, especially Vulg., LXX) though it is more often understood as a further indication of their courage (NIV, REB, NEB, etc.). *They put to flight everyone living in the valleys* (v. 15, cf. NRSV, RSV) is better translated, ‘they barred all the valleys.’”

f. Tribal support at the stronghold: the Benjaminites and Judahites (12:16-18)

16 Other Benjaminites and some men from Judah also came to David in his stronghold.

17 David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in peace, to help me, I am ready to have you unite with me. But if you have come to betray me to my enemies when my hands are free from violence, may the God of our fathers see it and judge you."

18 Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said: "We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you." So David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands.

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary identifies Amasai as: "One of the chief captains of Judah who, with a considerable body of men from Judah and Benjamin, joined David while an outlaw at Ziklag. He, with others, was made captain of David's band (1 Chron 12:18), about 1015 B.C. This is the Amasai who is supposed by some to be identical with Amasa."

We understand that David hesitated somewhat before accepting Amasai and the people who were with him. He must have known him as one of the captains in Saul's army, who served under him when David was Saul's army general. Amasai's response to David's hesitation sweeps away any reservations in David's mind.

The Hebrew text of Amasai's response reads literally: "Yours we are, David, and on your side, [you] son of Jesse: *shalom, shalom*, [be] unto you and *shalom* be unto your helpers, for your God helps you."

The text states that it was the Holy Spirit who put those words in Amasai's mouth. That means that it was actually God Himself who said this to David for his encouragement.

The NIV reads that David "made them leaders of his raiding bands." The word "raiding" is not in the Hebrew text.

g. Tribal support at Ziklag: the Manassites (12:19-22)

19 Some of the men of Manasseh defected to David when he went with the Philistines to fight against Saul. (He and his men did not help the Philistines because, after consultation, their rulers sent him away. They said, "It will cost us our heads if he deserts to his master Saul.")

20 When David went to Ziklag, these were the men of Manasseh who defected to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu and Zillethai, leaders of units of a thousand in Manasseh.

21 They helped David against raiding bands, for all of them were brave warriors, and they were commanders in his army.

22 Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Chronicles assumes the readers know about the Philistines rejecting David's assistance before the battle (v. 19; cf. 1 Sam. 29) and about David's subsequent victory over the Amalekite raiding bands (vv. 20-21; cf. 1 Sam. 30, especially verses 8, 15, where the word 'band' – RSV; 'raiding party,' NIV – reappears. The theme of *help*, following verse 18, is especially prominent (vv. 19, 21, 22). In this context David's withdrawal from the Philistine army must be understood as divine providence. Verse 22 probably summarizes the whole of verses 1-21 though it also supplies a link to verses 23-27. According to 1 Samuel 27:2, David's personal army numbered 600 before he moved to Ziklag, eight years later at Hebron, it must have swelled considerably

and seemed like great army (NIV, NRSV, cf. GNB, REB, NEB), especially as Saul's standing army was very small. The final phrase in Hebrew is literally 'like the camp/army of God,' perhaps hinting at the unseen divine support, as in the only other occurrence of this phrase (Gen. 32:2, MT, v.3)."

It is obvious that the comparison of David's band with "the army of God" cannot be taken literally or numerically. Daniel speaks about "the army of God" in his vision of heaven, where he sees "the Ancient of Days" sitting on the heavenly throne. He says: "Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: "Of all the Hebrew tribes, there were no men better fitted than these by their native training to form the nucleus of David's army. They covered the whole ground described as the land of the patriarchs. Hebron and Ziklag, lying in the north and south, and Adullam among the mountains of Judah on the west, are chiefly marked as three of the boundaries of the territory covered by them, and we recognize the fourth in Sebbeh, the ancient Masada, on the west of the Dead Sea. That this was 'the hold' mentioned, 1 Chron 12:8: cf. 1 Sam 20:4-5, may be inferred from the identity of name; and to the same effect is the testimony of Josephus ... when he speaks of Masada as a fortress erected by our ancient kings as a place of safe deposit for their wealth during war, and as a place of safety for their persons."

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the phrase "the army of God": "A forcible comment on the metaphorical use of this phrase is found in ... 1 Samuel 14:15; Authorized Version, 'a very great trembling' is the translation of Hebrew 'trembling of God.' The force with which this verse commences probably explains the call there was for many and able 'captains' for a host becoming daily larger."

h. Tribal support at Hebron (12:23-37)

23 These are the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the Lord had said:

24 men of Judah, carrying shield and spear-6,800 armed for battle;

25 men of Simeon, warriors ready for battle-7,100;

26 men of Levi-4,600,

27 including Jehoiada, leader of the family of Aaron, with 3,700 men,

28 and Zadok, a brave young warrior, with 22 officers from his family;

29 men of Benjamin, Saul's kinsmen-3,000, most of whom had remained loyal to Saul's house until then;

30 men of Ephraim, brave warriors, famous in their own clans-20,800;

31 men of half the tribe of Manasseh, designated by name to come and make David king-18,000;

32 men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do-200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command;

33 men of Zebulun, experienced soldiers prepared for battle with every type of weapon, to help David with undivided loyalty-50,000;

34 men of Naphtali-1,000 officers, together with 37,000 men carrying shields and spears;

35 men of Dan, ready for battle-28,600;

36 men of Asher, experienced soldiers prepared for battle-40,000;

37 and from east of the Jordan, men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, armed with every type of weapon-120,000.

The Hebrew text of v. 24 reads literally: “And these [are] the numbers of the bands [that were] ready armed to the war, [and] came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord.”

The wording suggests that the Lord’s promise to David that he would succeed Saul as king over Israel was general knowledge in Israel.

According to *The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary* the total of this list of people recruited for David’s army amounts to a total of 336,600 men, with 1222 heads and captains.”

Barnes’ Notes observes: “The small size of the contingent from Judah, which is generally represented as numerically superior to every other tribe, and which might have been expected to be especially zealous on behalf of its own prince and tribesman, throw some doubt upon the numbers, which may be suspected of having in some instances undergone corruption.”

The Tyndale Commentary, however, states: “The list’s authenticity is indicated by some unexpected elements: the meagerness of Judah’s contingent (v. 26) and both Joseph tribes (vv. 30, 31, 37). The numbers curiously contrast substantial contributions from the tribes of the north (vv. 29-37) with the low figures for Judah (v. 24) and Levi (vv. 26-28). Both these latter tribes are of special interest for Chronicles. Perhaps the list excludes those whose allegiance to David had already been publicly declared, such as his earlier anointing as king over Judah (2 Sam. 2:1-4), since even Judah only gradually committed itself to David (vv. 16-18). The northern tribes would generally have been allied to Saul’s house up to this point, as suggested by several annotations (vv. 29, 31, 33), so that the list’s main purpose may be to confirm the extent of support transferred to David during the indecisive period following Saul’s death. Some of the notes, particularly verses 27-28, 29, 31, 33, betray the Chronicler’s own contribution.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “The large numbers of some of the joyful pilgrims to Hebron, as for instance of the trans-Jordanic tribes, the very small number that came of the tribe of Judah (in fact, lowest but one, *i.e.* Benjamin, and yet nearest home), and of some others, help to invest with doubt the numerals of this passage, although it is not at all difficult to suggest some very passable explanations of these phenomena. This doubt is not lessened by the total, which, according to this list, must make a figure between three hundred and forty thousand and three hundred and fifty thousand men. To the host have to be added, as we are expressly told, the ‘asses, camels, mules, and oxen,’ which carried the ‘bread, meat, meal, cakes of figs and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep in abundance,’ for the consumption of the host during their ‘three days’ stay ‘with David,’ and their journeys to and fro. In the presence of such numbers, and the celebration of such an occasion, Hebron must indeed have beheld the reflection of its own probable meaning, of the ‘fellowship’ or ‘community’ of society.”

One of the most intriguing features in this list is the mention of the “men of Issachar,” “who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments: “According to the Targum they were all astronomers and astrologers: ‘and the sons of Issachar, who had understanding to know the times, and were skilled in fixing the beginnings of years, the commencement of months, and the intercalation of months and years; skillful in the changes of the moon, and in fixing the lunar solemnities to their proper times; skillful also in the doctrine of the solar periods; astrologers in signs and stars, that they might show Israel what to do; and their teachers were two hundred chiefs of the Sanhedrin: and all their brethren excelled in the words of the law, and were endued with wisdom, and were obedient to their command.’-Targum. It appears that in their wisdom, experience, and skill, their brethren had the fullest confidence; and nothing was done but by their direction and advice.”

The Tyndale Commentary writes: “The note about Issachar is tantalizingly vague, though no evidence connects this tribe with astrology In this context, the note refers to their discernment of God’s will for their own day.”

i. Celebration of David as king at Hebron (12:38-40)

38 All these were fighting men who volunteered to serve in the ranks. They came to Hebron fully determined to make David king over all Israel. All the rest of the Israelites were also of one mind to make David king.

39 The men spent three days there with David, eating and drinking, for their families had supplied provisions for them.

40 Also, their neighbors from as far away as Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules and oxen. There were plentiful supplies of flour, fig cakes, raisin cakes, wine, oil, cattle and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

These verses conclude the list of people supporting David. *The Tyndale Commentary* comments: “It amplifies the contribution made by the people (*all Israel*, v. 38), especially the soldiers (cf. vv. 23-27) and *all the rest of the Israelites* (v. 38). The latter phrase (Heb. *šerîṭ*, ‘rest’), possibly referring to the former adherents of Saul’s kingdom, may also contain an allusion to the remnant, and so point to the potential for unity in the post-exilic community (cf. also 1 Chr. 13:2; 2 Chr. 30:6). The paragraph as a whole, however, shows that the people of God are the real heroes of the chapter. These Israelites exemplify the principle that when God’s people become committed to one another (cf. the use of *help* throughout the chapter) in obedient service to God’s chosen king, they find both unity and joy (cf. John 15:9-11).

The unparalleled three-day festival (vv. 39-40), is the climax of the covenant (11:3). Covenants of all kinds were often celebrated by a special meal (e.g. Gen. 31:54; Exod. 24:11), including the Lord’s Supper as the celebration meal of the new covenant. This feast of David’s kingship is marked by plenty and joy, exemplifying the people’s practical concern for one another as well as for their king. It portrays with graphic simplicity, as perhaps nowhere else in the Old Testament, the potential for real unity between God, king, and people.”

b. David brings the ark to Jerusalem (13:1 – 16:43)

i. The ark begins its journey (13:1-14)

a. The decision to move the ark (13:1-4)

1 David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

2 He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasturelands, to come and join us.

3 Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul."

The Tyndale Commentary states: “This introduction, identifiable by characteristic vocabulary and themes, has been added by the Chronicler to 2 Samuel 6. Three theses, none of them found in 2

Samuel 6, dominate these verses. The first, continued from chapters 11 – 12, is ‘all Israel’ (v. 5, RSV, etc.), described in verses 2, 4 as *the whole assembly*. In the light of the tribes’ commitment to David at Hebron (11:1-3; 12:38-40), bringing back the ark is no longer just a military initiative undertaken by David’s men (cf. 2 Sam. 6:1), but a religious enterprise of the whole people. The *assembly* in this context must refer to representatives from most if not all the tribes. The unity theme is amplified twice, by references to *priests and Levites*, who will play a key role in the ark’s transportation (chapters 15 – 16), and to *the rest of our brothers* throughout the territories of Israel (cf. 12:38). The latter contrasts Israel’s disintegration after Saul’s final defeat (cf. 10:7), and offers new encouragement after David’s victory over the Philistines (14:8-17) to those too hesitant to attend the anointing at Hebron (11:1-3).

The second theme is that of consultation, a special interest of Chronicles rarely found in Samuel or Kings. Kings such as Solomon (2 Chr. 1:2), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20:21), and Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30:2; 32:3), are commended for this, in stark contrast with the failure of Rehoboam (2 Chr. 10:6-14) and Amaziah (2 Chr. 25:16-17) to follow good advice. David’s consultation here allows the Israelite people to take a corporate decision on the central issue of the ark’s future (v. 4). In so doing, Chronicles presents a leadership ideal for the people of God very different from authoritarian patterns well known in ancient and modern times. It is notable that in Chronicles, the kings who consult their people are also those who seek Yahweh (cf. v 3; 2 Chr. 1:5, Solomon; 2 Chr. 20:3-4, Jehoshaphat; 2 Chr. 30:18; 31:21, Hezekiah).

‘Seeking’ God is the third theme in this paragraph (v. 3), and sets a pattern for the whole of David’s reign. It forms a further step away from absolutism as Chronicles’ model for kinship, for ‘seeking Yahweh requires constant dependence on him.

In verse 2 the verb that lies behind *let us send ... far and wide* (cf. NRSV, RSV) is important in chapters 13 – 15, but is of uncertain meaning here (Heb. *prš*, ‘to break out’ Most likely it has the sense of NIV, NRSV, RSV, though it could be treated as in LXX (‘and if it is the will of the LORD our God,’ GNB, cf. JB).”

Apparently, David first consulted with his military advisors regarding the transportation of the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath Jaerim to Jerusalem, before communicating with the whole nation of Israel. David’s concern about the ark shows his understanding that Israel was a theocracy. He saw himself as a monarch, reigning by the grace of God.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “David’s seeking is not only in sharp contrast with his predecessor Saul (1 Chr. 10), but leads directly to God’s renewing of the covenant (1 Chr. 17) and the preparations for the temple (1 Chr. 12-29).”

The ark was an earthly representation of a heavenly reality; it symbolized the throne of God and His presence. God had said to Moses: “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.”²⁴ The cover of the ark was the place where the sins of the nation were atoned for. The cover was called “the atonement cover.”²⁵ The Hebrew word is *kapporeth*, which the KJV renders as “mercy seat.” The LXX renders this in Greek as *hilasteérion*, which is the word the Apostle Paul uses when he describes the atonement brought about by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross. We read: “God presented him as a *sacrifice of atonement*, through faith in his blood.”²⁶ That identifies the atonement cover with Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins.”

²⁴ Ex. 25:22

²⁵ Lev. 16:2, 13-15

²⁶ Rom. 3:25

David must have had in mind that, not only God was physically present above the cover of the ark, but also that it was the place where the sins of the whole nation would be covered.

Saul had paid no attention to the ark. He must have known that it was at Kiriath Jearim, but we don't read that he ever went there or arranged for it to occupy any centrality in the nation. It is obvious why God called David "a man after his own heart."²⁷

In consulting the whole nation about the project of bringing the ark over to occupy the central place in the nation of Israel, David not only emphasized the centrality of the throne of God, but also the reality of human sin and the need for its atonement. In New Testament terms, he stressed the importance of the cross.

David must have realized that the centrality of the ark would promote the unity of the nation of Israel. In putting his plan before the people, he suggests that everyone be involved, especially the priests and Levites, most of whom had evidently been without a job during the reign of Saul.

David states that during Saul's reign the ark was not consulted. The Hebrew word used is *darash*, which has multiple meanings. It can be rendered "to frequent," "to follow," or "to seek," the latter specifically in the context of worship.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "Chapter 13 clearly commends the priority David gives to the ark, but it also contains a warning that it was much more than a symbol of the divine presence. The enthusiasm of verse 3 (*Let us bring the ark of our God back to us*) gives way swiftly to David's despair, *How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?* (v. 12). Even David could not take the reality of God's presence for granted. If Chronicles' readers wanted Israel's former glories restored, they too must reckon with a God whose dynamic holiness could not be contained within human limitations. The chapter is also notable for recording one of David's two failures in the Chronicler's account (for the other, see 1 Chr. 21). David makes the fundamental error of failing to recognize God's true nature, and as a result, both here and in chapter 21, some Israelites have to pay the ultimate price. While it is true that the Chronicler omits several details from earlier accounts of David's private life, including the Bathsheba incident (2 Sam. 11 – 12), he certainly does not whitewash David's reputation, as some have alleged."

I Chronicles chapter 21, the above commentary refers to, tells the story of the census David ordered to be taken, for which God's anger came upon the nation.

b. The action of moving the ark (13:5-8)

5 So David assembled all the Israelites, from the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim.

6 David and all the Israelites with him went to Baalah of Judah (Kiriath Jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God the Lord, who is enthroned between the cherubim — the ark that is called by the Name.

7 They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it.

8 David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets.

In bringing his case before the nation as a whole, David receives the backing of all the people. He also makes sure that everybody will be involved in the transportation of the ark.

²⁷ I Sam. 13:14

We read: “David assembled all the Israelites, from the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath.” *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* states: “This is taken by many writers for the Nile; but the Syriac, ‘from the river of Egypt.’ A small brook flowing into the Mediterranean, near the modern el-Arish, which forms the southern boundary of Palestine.”

The Pulpit Commentary suggests: “There can surely be little doubt that it is the river Nile which is here spoken of, after comparison of the following passages: — ... Joshua 13:3; Isaiah 23:3; ... Jeremiah 2:18. Though others, quoting ... Joshua 13:3 and 19:26, and interpreting Shihor generically as applicable to any dark, turbid stream, make it the modern *Wady el-Arish*.”

The mistake David made in the way the ark was transported was that he ordered it to be put on a cart drawn by oxen. The law, however, stipulated that the ark was to be carried by the Levites.²⁸ The clan of Kohathites was responsible for this.²⁹ Evidently, David had not followed Moses’ command to obtain a copy of the law and read it every day. Moses had said about the king of Israel: “When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.”³⁰

The bringing over of the ark to Jerusalem was accompanied by a huge parade of music.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The ‘all Israel’ theme of verses 1-4 is continued, but now ‘all the chosen men of Israel’ (2 Sam. 6:1) and ‘all the people who were with David’ (2 Sam. 6:2) have now become simply ‘all Israel’ (vv. 5, 6, RSV, etc.). The inclusiveness is further underlined by the extremely wide description of Israel’s boundaries. Instead of the usual ‘Dan to Beersheba’ (e.g. 1 Sam. 3:20, 2 Sam. 3:10), Israel extends from the *Shihor* river, probably the easternmost branch of the Nile, to Labo of Hamath (Lebo Hamath, NIV, REB, NEB, NRSV; ‘the entrance of Hamath,’ RSV), probably modern Lebweh at the watershed of Beqa’ valley. This extended Israel is based on Joshua’s vision of the Promised Land, and David here is the one who turned hope into reality (cf. Josh. 13:2-5). *Baalath*, on the Judean-Philistine border, where the ark had been abandoned (= Baale-Judah, 2 Sam. 6:2), seems to be understood as an alternative name for *Kiriath Jaerim*, on the basis of Joshua 15:9 (cf. Josh. 15:60; 18:14).

Two contrasting attitudes to the ark are revealed. On the one hand, it represents Yahweh’s majestic presence, as in the rare formula ‘enthroned above the cherubim’ (v. 6 RSV; cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 1 Chr. 13:6; 2 Kgs 19:15 = Isa. 37:16; Pss. 80:1; 99:1), and the abbreviated expression *called by the Name* (cf. 2 Sam. 6:2). The former phrase indicates that the ark may have been regarded as Yahweh’s empty throne, and the latter that the ark, like the temple, belonged to God as his earthly residence (cf. Deut. 12:11; 1 Kgs 8:29; 2 Chr. 7:16). Such majesty was acknowledged and celebrated with all Israel’s might and music (v. 8). On the other hand, the awareness of divine majesty was diminished by the ark’s being separated from the Tent (still at nearby Gibeon – 1 Chr. 16:39ff.; 21:29-30; 2 Chr. 1:3, 13), and by its transportation on a *new cart* (v. 7). The use of such inadequate transport showed David unthinkingly continuing a Philistine superstition (1 Sam. 6:7), and failing to ‘seek’ God (1 Chr. 15:12-15, especially v. 13). In other words, Israel got into difficulties because they failed to recognize that worship of the true God meant they could no longer simply follow contemporary pagan practices.”

²⁸ Deut. 10:8

²⁹ See Num. 3:30, 31.

³⁰ Deut. 17:18, 19

One would have it that there would be Priests or Levites who would have been able to advise the king as to the prescribed way in which the ark was to be transported. They either did not get through to the king in time, or the tradition had been forgotten in their family history.

c. God's deadly holiness (13:9-12)

9 *When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled.*

10 *The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God.*

11 *Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.*

12 *David was afraid of God that day and asked, "How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?"*

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the incident that took Uzzah's life as he touched the ark: "The threshing floor of Chidon. For Chidon, the parallel place has *Nachon*; possibly these are two names of the same place, or one form is a corruption of the other; but there is nothing to determine for us which. Owing to the meaning of *Nachon* being 'prepared,' the version of Aquila is 'to the prepared threshing floor,' with which the Jonathan Targum agrees ... The *threshing-floor* was a circular plot of hard ground, from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter, on which the oxen trampled out the grain. Threshing floors evidently often became landmarks, and helped to designate places (... Genesis 50:10; ... 2 Samuel 24:16). *The oxen stumbled*. In the parallel place the Authorized Version renders 'shook it.' The Hebrew verb is the same (*shamat*) in both places. Its elementary meanings are 'to strike' and 'to throw down.' Perhaps the meaning is near the Vulgate rendering, *calcitrabant*, and equivalent to the rendering, *became restive*. *Ver. 10* — There seems some little uncertainty as to why Uzza was to blame in a desire that would appear both praiseworthy and instinctive, to steady the ark or save it from actually falling. Uzza was probably not a priest or Levite, and it is so distinctly said his sin consisted in *putting his hand to the ark*, that perhaps the direction of ... Numbers 4:15 may be sufficient account of the matter. Special injunction had been given (... Exodus 25:14,15) that the poles with which to bear it should not be taken out of the rings, but be always stationary there. If we suppose that it was *not* a question of the ark being absolutely overthrown, but simply of its riding unsteadily, his presumptuousness would *not* have the further defense of an instinctive impulse."

What struck down Uzzah was God's holiness, which was like a very high electric charge that went through his body and killed him. The ark was charged with God's holiness because God was still present above the cherubim.

The Tyndale Commentary states: "That *Uzzah's* practical concern for the ark was punished with apparently unjustified severity has often puzzled modern Western readers, but the incident is intelligible if read on its own terms. In the Old Testament, God's holiness possessed genuine power and could have striking physical and spiritual effects (cf. Lev. 10:1ff; Isa. 6:1ff.) It was often associated with cultic objects such as the ark, in a way that is no longer familiar to most readers and which has now been superseded by the work of Christ (Heb. 9:1-12). Further, David's contemporaries would not have been entirely unaware of similar tragedies which had recently struck both the Philistines (1 Sam. 5) and Israelites from Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam. 6:19-20). Their experience might have given a warning that to be in possession of the ark was no unqualified guarantee of divine blessing. *Uzzah died*, therefore, because neither he nor those responsible for the transportation arrangements (including David) recognized the real nature of the relationship between the ark and its God, the Holy One of Israel. Chronicles confirms

that this dynamic holiness was personal and divine rather than magical by simplifying ‘before the ark of God’ (2 Sam. 6:7) to *before God* (v. 10).

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One of the lessons to be learned for us in the New Testament dispensation is that holiness can be as dangerous as electricity. Touching a bare wire without insulation can have fatal results. Approaching God’s holiness without the protection of the blood of Christ can be equally dangerous. *The Tyndale Commentary* gives the death of Ananias and Saphira³¹ as a New Testament example. Without Christ’s protection God’s holiness can be “a consuming fire.”³²

David’s reaction to *Uzzah*’s death was anger and fear. The Hebrew word translated “anger” is *charah*, which literally means “to glow.” The word has a strong connotation in some contexts. In the case of Cain and Able, for instances we read: “Cain was very angry.”³³

We don’t read what the object of David’s anger was, but the suggestion is that David was angry with God.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the word *charah*: “The Hebrew root (*charah*) betokens a mixture of anger and grief. It is the word used of Jonah (iv. 1, 9), and perhaps our English word ‘vexed’ or ‘hurt,’ would convey its meaning.”

What must have struck David was the discovery that the law of God’s holiness was as absolute as any law of nature. By way of comparison we could say that, if we drop a precious object, such as an old Chinese vase, to the floor, it will break in pieces. We could wish that nature would make an exception, but it doesn’t.

David’s secondary reaction was fear. The Hebrew word used is *yare*, which describes Adam’s reaction, after he had sinned, to the presence of God. We read: “I heard you in the garden, and I was *afraid* because I was naked; so I hid.”³⁴ The word is also found in the multiple announcements of angels, that begin with the words “fear not.”

David made the place of the incident into a memorial by calling it *Perez Uzzah*, “the place where *Uzzah* perished.” The literal meaning is “outbreak against *Uzzah*.” The breakthrough of God’s holiness was like floodwater breaking through a dike.

d. God’s unconditional blessing (13:13-14)

³¹ Acts 5:1-11

³² Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29

³³ Gen. 4:5

³⁴ Gen. 3:10

13 He did not take the ark to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.

14 The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house for three months, and the Lord blessed his household and everything he had.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states that Obed-Edom was “a Philistine of Gath and servant of David.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “That Obed-edom is called ‘the Gittite,’ *i.e.* of Gath-rimmon, a Levite city of Dan (... Joshua 21:24), might probably indicate that there was another Obed-Edom, from whom to distinguish him. Such a one would appear readily to offer in the name of Obed-Edom, son of Jeduthun, a ‘Merarite Levite’ (ch. 15:18-24; 16:5, 38; 26:4-15). But the difficulty occurs that an expression in this last quotation seems to identify him with the Obed-Edom of ... 2 Samuel 6:11; and the last sentence of our next verse. If they are one and the same, it has been suggested that marriage might account for the Merarite living in a Kohathite city.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Though some have equated him with the Levite(s) of the same name in chapter 15 (see 15:18, 21, 24; also 16:5, 38; 26:4ff.), the non-Israelite form of the name and the epithet Gittite (= inhabitant of Gath) make it more likely that he was a Philistine. David apparently thought that since the ark might bring further trouble to Israel, Philistines ought first to be exposed to the risk, especially as God had not hesitated previously to show his displeasure with the Philistines over the ark (cf. 1 Sam. 5). The result, however, is as unexpected as the preceding tragedy, and David is as unaware of the nature of Yahweh’s mercy as he was of his holiness. David may have already conquered Gath (cf. 18:1), but it is Yahweh rather than David who brings blessing to its inhabitant, extending his bounty to Obed-Edom’s whole household (emphasized by the tripe use of Heb. *bayit* in v.14 for *family/house/household*), even to future generations (26:5). The theme of Yahweh’s peaceful intentions for David’s international neighbors continues in chapter 14.”

We do not learn how the Lord’s blessing upon Obed-Edom’s family was evinced. The period of three months, which was the length of time in which the ark resided at that place, was too short to indicate increase in numbers of the family.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary states: “The Targum ends this chapter thus: ‘And the Word of the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and his children, and his grand-children; and his wife conceived, and his eight daughters-in-law: and each brought forth eight at one birth, insomuch that in one day there were found, of fathers and children, fourscore and one; and He blessed and increased greatly all that belonged to him.’”

ii. God’s blessings on David’s kingdom (14:1-17)

a. David’s palace (14:1-2)

1 Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs, stonemasons and carpenters to build a palace for him.

2 And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and that his kingdom had been highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.

In verses 1 and 2 we read that Hiram, the king of Tyre, acknowledged David’s ascension to the throne by sending him a delegation, probably to congratulate him, and also material and builders to assist in the building of a palace.

There seems to be a chronological problem in that, apparently, David did not build a palace until he had captured Mount Zion.

The Pulpit Commentary states: “The contents of this chapter belong to a period of time subsequent to the taking of the fort of Zion, and find their parallel in ... 2 Samuel 5:11-25. But if found here in the same order of place as there, they would have followed upon ... 1 Chronicles 9:9; [one Bible scholar] attributes this difference to the desire of our compiler to represent the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem as David’s first undertaking on becoming king of the united people. Considering the contents of this chapter, and remembering that it stands between the unsuccessful attempt to bring home the ark and the final successful bringing of it, it would seem a far more natural thing to suppose that this suggested its present order; for compare ... 1 Chronicles 15:1, 2. The parallel is very close. As far as to the word ‘Elishua’ (ver. 5), there is no difference in the least degree material, except that the word ‘concubines’ is found in Samuel, and preceding the word ‘wives’ of our ver. 3 (yet see ... 1 Chronicles 3:9). The two names *Elpalet* and *Nogah* are also not found in the parallel, but our compiler is consistent with himself; for see ... 1 Chronicles 3:6, 7.”

Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary writes about Hiram: “Hiram appears throughout the reigns of David and Solomon. He sent representatives to David after David captured Jerusalem. When David built a palace, Hiram furnished cedar from Lebanon and workmen to assist with the project. In later years, when Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, Hiram again sent cedar and skilled laborers—this time in return for wheat and olive oil. Hiram also supplied ships and sailors for Solomon’s trade interests, probably for a share of the profits.”

Hiram’s recognition of David as king of Israel made David realize that his ascension to the throne was really God’s plan. There is a note of uncertainty in this conclusion, as if David had asked himself if this was actually what God wanted him to be. Evidently, he never saw himself as the future king of Israel. He never “ran for office,” to use a modern term. That is an indication of a humble heart.

When God calls a person to a certain position, He will often give a confirmation by other members of the body of Christ. If such a thing does not happen, we ought to ask ourselves if our assumptions are really God’s will for our life. If others do not recognize the working of the Holy Spirit in us, maybe the Spirit isn’t working.

David also recognized that his exaltation was not because of himself, but because of God’s choice of Israel as His people.

Hiram seems to have been more convinced that a king ought to live in a palace than the king himself was.

b. David’s sons (14:3-7)

3 In Jerusalem David took more wives and became the father of more sons and daughters.

4 These are the names of the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

5 Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet,

6 Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

7 Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet.

The record states that David took more wives after he got settled in Jerusalem. The names of the wives are not mentioned, but we are told that he fathered thirteen children of which the names are given.

Among them are Nathan and Solomon. Solomon would become king after David. Nathan would be the link in the coming of the Messiah.³⁵

The Tyndale Commentary states about David's sons: "The list of thirteen names, repeated in 1 Chronicles 3:5-8, is included as a continuation of the house theme of verse 1, in a further foreshadowing of the house/dynasty of chapter 17. It is assumed that God is the source of this fertility, though not necessarily approving of David's polygamy. The *more wives* and *more sons* and daughters (v. 3) assume the reader's knowledge of the earlier list at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:2-5). If, as is likely, the names are given in order of birth, Solomon was actually tenth in the line."

c. David's Philistine wars (14:8-16)

8 When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went out to meet them.

9 Now the Philistines had come and raided the Valley of Rephaim;

10 so David inquired of God: "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?"

The Lord answered him, "Go, I will hand them over to you."

11 So David and his men went up to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, "As waters break out, God has broken out against my enemies by my hand." So that place was called Baal Perazim.

12 The Philistines had abandoned their gods there, and David gave orders to burn them in the fire.

13 Once more the Philistines raided the valley;

14 so David inquired of God again, and God answered him, "Do not go straight up, but circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees.

15 As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army."

16 So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army, all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

The anger of the Philistines toward David was the fact that David had received asylum in Philistine country while fleeing from Saul and was now replacing Saul as king. The tension between Philistia and Israel was connected to Israel's conquest of Palestine. The Philistines must have thought that David's ascension to the throne would be a threat to their existence. In a way they were right.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "David had been no great threat to the Philistines while Israel and Judah remained divided, but an all-Israelite kingdom (v. 8) was a different matter. So the Philistines gathered in Rephaim valley, probably located south west of Jerusalem near Bethlehem (the incident of 11:15-20 is linked here).

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: "All the Philistines went up to seek David. In the hope of accomplishing his ruin (for so the phrase is used, 1 Sam 23:15; 24:2-3) before his throne was consolidated. Their hostility arose, both from a belief that his patriotism would lead him, before long, to wipe out the national dishonor at Gilboa; and by fear, that in any invasion of their country, his thorough knowledge of their weak points would give him superior advantages. They resolved, therefore, to surprise and crush him ere he was fairly seated on his throne."

We are not told how David consulted the Lord before meeting the Philistine threat. He may have sought the Lord's will by asking a priest to use the Urim and Thummim.

³⁵ Luke 3:31

Evidently, the Philistines intended a surprise attack, but somehow David found out. It is interesting that David did not react to this information without first consulting the Lord. A normal human reaction would have been to attack instead of defend. God's answer was "Go, I will hand them over to you."

David's victory over the Philistines must have seemed to him as the birth of a child. The name given to the place of victory, "Baal Perazim" suggests the breaking of the water during childbirth. According to a footnote in the NIV, "Baal Perazim" means: "The Lord who breaks out." David did not give any credit to himself, but ascribed the victory to the Lord's intervention.

David's victory was so swift and overwhelming that the Philistine army fled in panic, leaving behind the idols they had brought into the battle. *Barnes' Notes* observes: "The practice of carrying images of the gods to battle was common among the nations of antiquity, and arose from the belief that there was virtue in the images themselves, and that military success would be obtained by means of them."

The Pulpit Commentary adds: "The parallel translates more literally, 'And there they left,' as we might also do here; and goes on to read 'their images,' in place of 'their gods' (... 2 Samuel 5:21). These they burned with fire, according to the command of ... Deuteronomy 7:5, 25."

The defeat did not make the Philistines give up; they prepared for a second attack. The Hebrew text of v. 13 reads literally: "And again the Philistines spread themselves abroad in the valley." The verb used is *pashat*, which literally means "to strip." We find the same verb in the verse: "So when Joseph came to his brothers, they *stripped* him of his robe — the richly ornamented robe he was wearing."³⁶ But it is also used in the sense of invading, as in the verse: "A messenger came to Saul, saying, 'Come quickly! The Philistines are *raiding* the land.'"³⁷

The Tyndale Commentary states: "Whether the second battle (vv. 13-16) occurred at the same place and time is much less clear. Because a place-name is omitted in verse 13, and *Gibeon* (2 Sam. 5:25 'Geba') is mentioned in verse 16, many commentators ... have concluded that the second conflict was an attempt to recapture the city from David and took place in the Gibeon area north west of Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 28:21, where Mount Perazim and Gibeon are linked in an apparent reference to this battle). On the other hand, Rephaim appears in 2 Samuel 5:22 and is perhaps assumed in verse 13 (so LXX, P), suggesting a similar location to the first battle. However, the extensive pursuit towards *Gezer* (v. 16) on the edge of the coastal plain is a hint that the fighting covered a much wider area than any single battlefield."

Again David consults the Lord before engaging in any military action. This time God tells him not to employ in a frontal attack like the first time, but to move behind the enemy lines and attack from the back. Actually, it would not be David's attack, but the Lord's. An army of angels would move ahead of David's and strike the Philistines. David could not see the angelic force, but he would hear them as they marched above the balsam treetops.

The Adam Clarke's Commentary quotes the Targum, stating: "When thou shalt hear the sound of the angels coming to thy assistance, then go out to battle; for an angel is sent from the presence of God that he may render thy way prosperous."

The Pulpit Commentary comments on "A sound of going": "This is not a mere generic or longer form of expression to signify a sound itself. There is significance in the word 'going.' The sense of the Hebrew word would be thrown out more emphatically by such a rendering as, *the sound of steps* (literally, *stepping*). When the motion of the agitated leaves simulated the sound of steps, the stepping of men, then David and his army were to step forth to battle. Though the root of the 'stepping' spoken of as

³⁶ Gen. 37:23

³⁷ I Sam. 23:27

heard in the trees is not identical with that of the ‘going’ repeated twice in the remainder of the verse — *Then thou shalt go out... for God is gone forth* — yet it does alliterate to some extent with it, and rather creates the impression that it was intended to do so. However, the parallel place does not sustain this impression, inasmuch as a different word, ‘Thou shalt *bestir* thyself,’ is there employed, in place of the first occurrence of our supposed alliteration, in the clause, ‘Thou shalt go out.’ There is something stirring to the imagination, and probably it was felt so by David and his men, in the signal unseen yet not unheard, and in a sense not of earth, but midway between earth and heaven. The very various voices of the various trees, according to the character of their foliage, may well set poetry going, and startle or fascinate imagination, as the case may be. The music of one tree or grove is as different from that of another as can be — listen to the difference between the melancholy plaint so unceasing of some plantation of firs, and the multitudinous, silvery, rippling of but one white poplar of good size. Presumably the sound in the present case more resembled that of the steady tramp of them that march.”

The Hebrew verb *nakah* is used in the verse that reads: “they struck down the Philistine army.” It literally means “to kill,” as in the verse: “But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would *kill* him.”³⁸

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments on the extent of David’s victory: “The line from this to Gazer was intersected by the roads which led from Judah to the cities of the Philistines; and to recover possession of it, therefore, as was effected by this decisive battle, was equivalent to setting free the whole mountains of Judah as far as their most westerly slope.” This victory had great strategic importance for the peace of Judah.

d. David’s fame (14:17)

17 So David's fame spread throughout every land, and the Lord made all the nations fear him.

David’s double victory over the Philistines made him internationally famous. We are not told which countries expressed appreciation or interest, but simply that all the nations feared him.

This emphasized Israel’s security. No other nation would want to attack Israel and occupy its territory. Israel became known as the most powerful nation in the world.

In the Old Testament, spiritual blessing is often expressed in material terms. The same seems to be true for spiritual power. In the New Testament dispensation in which we live this is no longer so. The Apostle Paul describes the members of the body of Christ as “not many ... wise by human standards; not many ... influential; not many ... of noble birth.”³⁹ It was God’s victories that gave Israel the status of the most powerful nation in the world.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Though the different elements in chapter 14 come from various periods in David’s reign and are not listed chronologically, international recognition of David’s *fame* (lit. name) and Yahweh’s *fear* are seen as exemplifying David’s blessing under the covenant. A great name for the Davidic dynasty is a covenant blessing foreshadowed here (cf. 1 Chr. 17:8) and also later enjoyed by Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:8, 15). Similarly, Yahweh’s awe-inspiring activity was acknowledged by other nations through Asa (2 Chr. 14:13) and Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 17:10; 20:29; cf. 19:7). The promises contained in the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 2:25; 11:25) were therefore already being fulfilled through David and his dynasty.”

³⁸ Gen. 4:15

³⁹ I Cor. 1:26

iii. The ark completes its journey (15:1-29)

a. Preparing a place for the ark (15:1-3)

1 After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.

2 Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the Lord chose them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever."

3 David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord to the place he had prepared for it.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "The ark's final journey to Jerusalem is completed in chapters 15 – 16, though the chapter division does mark a useful distinction between the last stage of the journey (ch. 15) and the celebrations surrounding the ark's arrival (ch. 16).

The major subject of chapter 15, is easily discerned from the repeated phrase *to bring up* (Heb. *lēha`ālôt*) *the ark of the LORD* (vv. 3, 12, 14, 25, 28), which finds an echo in the fact that the Levites carry (Heb. *nāsā'*) *the ark* (vv. 2, 15, 26, 27). The journey from *the house of Obed-Edom* (v. 25; cf. 13:13-14) until the ark *came to the city of David* (v. 29, NRSV, RSV) is described in two phases: verses 1-15; preparing the people and the place for the ark; verses 16:29, celebrating the journey with joyful worship."

The chapter starts with the mention of David's constructions for himself. That would involve his own palace, mentioned in the previous chapter, and separate places for his wives.

Evidently the tabernacle, built under Moses' supervision during the desert journey, no longer existed or was in such disrepair that it could no longer be used.

Barnes' Notes suggests that "The old 'tent' or 'tabernacle' was still in existence at Gibeon (1 Chron 16:39; 2 Chron 1:3); but the ark had long been separated from it, and David probably thought that something newer and more magnificent was requisite. He therefore allowed the former tabernacle to keep its place, and had another made and erected."

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary observes: "*David made him houses in the city of David*. Through the liberality of his Tyrian ally (1 Chron 14:1), David was enabled to erect not only a palace for himself, but to furnish suitable accommodation for his numerous family. Where polygamy prevails, each wife has a separate house, or suite of apartments, for herself and children."

The Pulpit Commentary states: "The history of the preparations made for the reception of the ark, and for its safe and religious escort into the city, is now proceeded with. These preparations occupied the three months, or part of the three months, spoken of in ... 1 Chronicles 13:14. The *houses* may have been both his own (... 1 Chronicles 14:1) and the buildings referred to in ... 1 Chronicles 11:8 and ... 2 Samuel 5:9. The old tent, or *tabernacle*, is repeatedly alluded to, as in ... 1 Chronicles 16:39; ... 2 Chronicles 1:3. It will be remembered that the tabernacle established by Joshua at Shiloh remained there till the time of Eli, and the ark within it (... 1 Samuel 3:3). Afterwards we find it removed to Nob, for there David ate the showbread ... (1 Samuel 21:6). From thence, very possibly after the savage slaughter of the priests by the order of Saul, it was removed, and we find it at Gibeon, according to the above references. Here at Gibeon was an altar and 'high place,' which, in the earlier time of Solomon, formed the chief religious centre. The wanderings of the ark already given from Shiloh, through Philistia to Beth-Shemesh, Kirjath-jearim, Perez-Uzzah, now land it in this tent in Jerusalem. It is no more sheltered

in the tabernacle. But the tabernacle, as well as the ark, was ultimately brought to the new-built temple of Solomon (... 1 Kings 8:4; ... 1 Chronicles 9:19; ... 2 Chronicles 1:4).”

The incident of Uzzah’s death during the first effort to bring the ark to Jerusalem must have brought David to study the Scriptures. He thus discovered that the ark had to be carried exclusively by Levites.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The Chronicler seems to have been particularly inspired by the report of the second stage of the ark’s journey into Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6:12-19. In fact, four quite separate themes have been developed from the earlier account. First, God’s very evident blessing on Obed-Edom’s household, which was the original reason for the resuming of the ark’s journey (2 Sam. 6:12), has been developed into a description of blessing throughout David’s kingdom (ch. 14). Secondly, the original comment about the ark’s safe arrival (2 Sam. 6:17 = 2 Chr. 16:1) has been amplified by a further statement about David’s preparation of a special tent for the ark (1 Chr. 15:1). Thirdly, the joyful worship of 2 Samuel 6:14-16 has been extended into a full paragraph (15:16-29). All these changes draw attention to the special nature of the occasion as one of supreme importance and happiness for Israel.

But the chief development from 2 Samuel concerns the place of the Levites. A passing reference to ‘those who were carrying the ark’ in 2 Samuel 6:13 has become a detailed account of the Levites as carriers of the ark and leaders of worship (vv. 2-3, 11-15, 25-29), with the Levitical lists included as well. Although one cannot always be certain which parts of the material about the Levites derive from sources of the Davidic era and which parts reflect the probably varied interest of the post-exilic period, the following points can be made at this juncture. (a) Very little is known about the history of the Levites, especially in the pre-exilic period (Num. 3 – 4, 8, 18 detail with a short transitional period, describing ideals to be attained rather than a record of events). (b) A consistent post-exilic tradition persists, with which verse 16 is in complete harmony, that David instructed the Levites about leading music and praise (e.g. Neh. 12:24, 36, 46); (c) A fundamental change in the Levites’ role was necessitated by the existence of the temple. Once the ark was deposited in Jerusalem, the Levites only twice more were to act as carriers (2 Sam. 15:24; 1 Kgs 8:1-9 = 2 Chr. 5:2-10; cf. Num. 4:1-33), and it is this change to which attention is directed here.

It is a moot point how far the Chronicler was attempting to ensure that the singers and gatekeepers of his own day were fully regarded as Levites, though this is often assumed by commentators. In fact, the main source for Levitical history, Nehemiah 9 – 13, is ambivalent. Sometimes in the post-exilic period, these and other groups were treated separately (cf. Neh. 7:39-45 = Ezra 2:36-42; 10:28, 39; 12:28-29, 45-47), but on occasion the musicians at least seem to be merged with the Levites (Neh. 11:15-17; 12:24, 27).

However, the main aim of chapter 15 is not to describe the Levites’ history and organization. The two central themes seem to be David’s role *vis-à-vis* the Levites and the priority of worship in Israel. David is the person chiefly responsible for the Levites’ transformed role (vv. 3, 11, 16). This is not meant to eulogize David’s kingship, but to emphasize his stature as a second Moses, adapting Moses’ original instructions (e.g. Num. 3:5-9) to new circumstances. This theme, however, is subsidiary to the primary aim of giving special encouragement about the activities and personnel of Israel’s worship. Israel had neglected the Levites in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 13:10), which effectively meant that God himself was being neglected. It is therefore probable that Chronicles was stimulating both all Israel (vv. 3, 28) and the Levites (vv. 4-15) to ensure that proper preparations were made for the nation’s worship. If they adopted David’s priorities, Chronicles’ readers could see God’s glory (1 Chr. 16:24; cf. Ezek. 44:4) and salvation (1 Chr. 16:35) restored again to his people.”

b. Preparing the people to carry the ark (15:4-10)

- 4 He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites;**
5 From the descendants of Kohath, Uriel the leader and 120 relatives;
6 from the descendants of Merari, Asaiah the leader and 220 relatives;
7 from the descendants of Gershon, Joel the leader and 130 relatives;
8 from the descendants of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the leader and 200 relatives;
9 from the descendants of Hebron, Eliel the leader and 80 relatives;
10 from the descendants of Uzziel, Amminadab the leader and 112 relatives.

A list of available Levites is given in vv. 5-10, mentioning six clans and a total of 862 persons.

c. Preparing for a joyful celebration (15:16-24)

- 16 David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.**
17 So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berekiah; and from their brothers the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah;
18 and with them their brothers next in rank: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel, the gatekeepers.
19 The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals;
20 Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to alamothe,
21 and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azariah were to play the harps, directing according to sheminith.
22 Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it.
23 Berekiah and Elkanah were to be doorkeepers for the ark.
24 Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-Edom and Jehiah were also to be doorkeepers for the ark.

We read that David addressed the Levites personally, telling all the Levites to “consecrate” themselves. The Hebrew word used is *qadash*, meaning “to make ceremonially or morally clean.” The first time the word is used is in connection with the Sabbath. We read: “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”⁴⁰ It is also used of people, as in: “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes.’”⁴¹

The Pulpit Commentary states: “These ‘sanctifyings’ consisted of different observances, according to the person and the occasion, but largely of ablutions of the body, washing of the clothes, and keeping separate from all natural and ceremonial causes of uncleanness in ordinary cases of Levitical service.”

The fact that David was able to give these instructions to the priests and to the whole clan of Levites suggests that he had a copy of the law.

⁴⁰ Gen. 2:3

⁴¹ Ex. 19:10

The bringing up of the ark was to be accompanied by music and singing. *Barnes' Notes* observes: "Singing had long been recognized as appropriate to religious ceremonies (Ex 15:21; Judg 5:1; 1 Chron 13:8); but this is the first occasion on which we find the duty of conducting musical services expressly laid on the Levites. Henceforth, the services of the tabernacle and the temple were regularly choral, and a considerable section of the Levites was trained in musical knowledge, and set apart to conduct this portion of the national worship."

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary states: "These eminent Levites were instructed to train the musicians and singers who were under them for the solemn procession. The performers were ranged in three choirs or bands, and the names of the principal leaders are given, 1 Chron 15:17-18, 21, with the instruments respectively used by each [psalteries, and harps, and cymbals. Josephus says that these instruments were made of electrum, a precious alloy of gold, of a pale yellow color]."

The Tyndale Commentary states: "The main appointments are given in verses 17-18, and divided in verses 19-21 into a Levitical orchestra of three sections comprising *cymbals*, *harps*, and *lyres* (the identification of the last two instruments is not exact), anticipating verse 28. The three leaders include Ethan (vv. 17, 19; cf. 6:44). Whether these are alternative names for the same person or different people remains unknown. *Kenaniah's* role (vv. 22, 27) is obscured by two translation difficulties. The rendering 'instructor' (cf. AV) is preferable to *in charge* (NIV, REB, NEB, GNB), which is the reading of the VSS and a few Hebrew MSS, and the context suggests 'music' (REB, NEB, NRSV, RSV) rather than 'transport' ... or 'oracle' (Vulg.) as *Kenaniah's* sphere of responsibility. The number and identity of the *gatekeepers* or *doorkeepers* (vv. 18, 23, 24) is also problematical. Some of them seem to have doubled up as musicians (cf. 9:33; 16:37-38). All thirteen names in verse 18 might be counted as gatekeepers (restricting the latter to the last two names, as NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB, GNB, is an interpretation based partly on v. 24), though the relationship of the four named gatekeepers in verses 23-24 to those in verse 18 is also unclear. *Obed-Edom* (vv. 18, 21, 24) is a further complication. He is probably but not necessarily identical with *Obed-Edom the Gittite* (v. 25; cf. 13:13-14; 26:4-8). If the identification is accepted, it seems that the term 'Levite' could have a functional as well as a genealogical sense, at least during the monarchy. Such a liberal attitude was less popular in post-exilic times. The acts of *sacrifice* performed on the journey (v. 26; cf. 16:1-2) and the blowing of *trumpets* (v. 28; cf. 2 Sam. 6:15), instruments traditionally played by priests, are sufficient to explain the occasional references in the lists to the priests (vv. 4, 11, 24)."

David left it up to the Levites to determine who should be the members of the choir that would sing as the ark was taken up to Jerusalem. He must have thought that they knew who had the best voices to produce "a joyful noise." Three names are given for those who would form the first group: Heman, Asaph and Ethan. In the Book of Psalms, Heman is mentioned as the author of Psalm 87. Ethan is mentioned as the composer of Psalm 88. Asaph was the most prolific of the three; we find his name mentioned in connection with twelve psalms: Psalm 50 and Psalms 73 – 83.

A second group consisted of twelve men, whose names are given as: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. The last two are mentioned as gatekeepers. The NIV states that the members of this group were "next in rank." The Hebrew text only uses the word "next." "Rank" is added, but is evidently not found in the original. The name Ben is also in the Hebrew text, but this has been disputed by Bible scholars. *The Pulpit Commentary* states about Ben: "This word is either altogether an accidental interpolation, or a remnant of some statement of the patronymic character regarding Zechariah. Another indication of the state of the text in this verse is to be found in the probable omission of the name *Azazgah* of ver. 21, after *Jeiel*. It will be observed that no trace of this word *Ben is* found in the repeated list of ver. 20."

This second group is mentioned as playing the lyres *according to alamothe*. *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* observes about the meaning of alamothe: “after the manner of virgins or girls; i.e., with the female voice ... Alamothe and Sheminith denote different parts of music; the former answering probably to our treble, or soprano, and the latter to the bass, or perhaps an octave below the treble. In short, Alamothe is supposed to mean with treble voices; Sheminith probably means with bass voices.”

The Pulpit Commentary states about Berekiah and Elkanah and the blowing of trumpets: “It appears from the following verse that there was also another couple of doorkeepers (*i.e.* persons to protect the openings of the ark, that it should not be opened), viz. *Obed-edom* and *Jehiah*. Between these couples probably went the seven *priests blowing the trumpets* (... Numbers 10:1-9). These trumpets were of solid silver, of one piece, were straight and narrow, and had an expanded mouth. They are found on the arch of Titus, and are described by Josephus. On the other hand, the trumpet, more correctly rendered ‘cornet’ (as distinguished from our cornet)], which was used for proclaiming the jubilee, for announcing the new year for sentinel and other special signals, and for war, was shaped like a ram’s horn, and probably made of the same. The particular appropriateness of the use of the former on this occasion is manifest, in addition to the fact that they were the appointed trumpets for the journeying of the camp and *a fortiori* of the ark itself at a time so essentially religious as the present. Yet, as we learn from ver. 28, the latter were used as well, and *cymbals, psalteries, and harps*. The original number of the silver trumpets was two only, and they were to be sounded strictly by the anointed priests, sons of Aaron, at all events when their employment was within the sanctuary. Their employment, however, grew far more general, and we find (... 2 Chronicles 5:12) that their number had risen to a hundred and twenty (so too ... 2 Chronicles 13:12; ... Nehemiah 12:35).”

d. The people’s joyful celebration (15:25-29)

25 So David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of units of a thousand went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom, with rejoicing.

26 Because God had helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed.

27 Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the singers, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs. David also wore a linen ephod.

28 So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouts, with the sounding of rams’ horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps.

29 As the ark of the covenant of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him in her heart.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Though based on 2 Samuel 6:12-16, this paragraph has reinterpreted the earlier text extensively. The primary change is that the homecoming of the ark (described here repeatedly as *the ark of the covenant*, vv. 25, 26, 28,29) has become a corporate act by *all Israel* (v. 28; cf. v. 3) rather than an expression of David’s personal faith. David, mentioned alone in 2 Samuel 6:12, is now joined by Israel’s *elders* and *commanders* (v. 25) as well as by the Levites (v. 26), and David’s personal sacrifice is replaced by those of the people’s representatives. Similarly, God’s help (v. 26), a theme applied to David in I Chronicles 12:18, is now a collective experience of the Levites. Even the mention of David’s linen ephod, which could be understood as either the smock-like priestly

garment of post-exilic times or the scantier pre-exilic version (2 Sam. 6:14, 20, 22), is less important than the fact that David and the Levites were all dressed in *fine linen* (v. 27).

The reference to *Michal* (v. 29), much briefer than in 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23, should therefore also be understood corporately. Not only did she despise David, but also, uniquely in Israel, she was out of sympathy with the great joy and concern over the ark. ‘Typical of unfaith’ ..., the isolation of Saul’s daughter was further demonstration of the unfitness of Saul’s house to lead the people of God.”

The NIV states that Kenaniah was in charge of the choir that accompanied the ark on its journey to Jerusalem. His name is spelled as Chenaniah in most other Bible translations. *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* states about him: “‘Chenaniah,’ (ken-a-ni’a; ‘established by Jehovah’), Kenani’ah (NIV). Chief of the Levites who, as master of song (1 Chron 15:22), conducted the grand musical services when the Ark was removed from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem (15:27). He was of the family of Izharites and was appointed over the inspectors of the building of the Temple (26:29), about 1000 B.C.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the scene: “Thus briefly is given by our compiler what occupies five verses (... 2 Samuel 6:19, 20-23) in the Book of Samuel. Neither of the words here rendered *dancing and playing* (but which would be better rendered ‘leaping and dancing’) is the same with those employed in ... 2 Samuel 6:14, 16, where our Authorized Version rendering is ‘dancing’ and ‘leaping and dancing’ respectively. The word in both of those verses that represents the dancing, does correctly so represent, but is a somewhat generic form, as it carries the idea of dancing in a circle. The reason of Michal ‘despising David in her heart’ can only be found in the unreason and the irreligion of that heart itself. She was a type of not a few, who despise devotion, enthusiasm, and above all practical liberality and generosity, on the part of any individual of their own family, when these are shown to Christ and his Church, and when they think they may be a trifle the poorer for it, or when they feel that the liberality and devotion of another exposes their own ‘poverty’ in both these respects.”

iv. Blessing, worship and praise (16:1-43)

The Tyndale Commentary comments with the following comparison: “‘Let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns!’ (16:31).

16:1-3, 43 – cf. 2 Samuel 6:17-20

16:8-22 – cf. Psalm 105:1-15

16:23-33 – cf. Psalm 96:1-13

16:34-36 – cf. Psalm 106:1, 47-48”

Then the commentary continues: “The primary objective of chapters 13 – 15 is fulfilled by the ark’s arrival in Jerusalem (v. 1). With the symbol of God’s presence restored to the center of his people’s life, Israel is about to receive renewed blessing (vv. 2, 43), and a transformation of their entire pattern of worship.

The chapter is arranged chiasmically, with a psalm celebrating Yahweh’s kingship over the nations as the central feature:

16:1-3, God’s blessing for every Israelite

16:4-7, Levites appointed for worship at Jerusalem

16:8-36, Psalm of praise

16:37-42, Levites and priests appointed for worship at Gibeon

16:43, Blessing for David’s household

The outer sections of this chiasm (a, a,) are taken over from the much briefer account in 2 Samuel 6. The two Levitical lists (b, b,) surrounding the psalm (c) are the only parts of chapter 16 not derived from a readily identifiable source, but are presumably taken from official temple records.

a. Blessing for every Israelite (16:1-3)

1 They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God.

2 After David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord.

3 Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman.

The Pulpit Commentary suggests that these verses actually belong to “the close of the last chapter, and they carry on the parallel of 2 Samuel 6. in its vers. 17-19.”

The commentary continues: “*In the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it.* So ch. 15:1 distinctly states that David had “pitched a tent” for the ark, and evidently to be ready for its arrival. On the other hand, there is no mention of any such tent having been got in readiness in ch. 13. or in ... 2 Samuel 6:1-11, which give the account of the attempt that disastrously failed. The expressions which are there used would rather lead to the conclusion that David’s intention was to take the sacred structure into his own home ... (2 Samuel 6:9, 10; ... 1 Chronicles 13:12, 13), for a while, at all events. The *laa’ohel* (tent) of the original designates, when intended strictly, a haircloth covering, resting on poles or planks (... Exodus 26:7, 11; 36:14, 19). The first occasion of the use of the word is found in ... Genesis 4:20. The *cukkah* (booth) was made of leaves and branches interwoven (Leviticus 23. 34, 40; 42; ... Deuteronomy 16:13). The *mishkan* (tabernacle) was the dwelling place or pavilion, which owned to the ten inner curtains as well as the outer covering and the framework (... Exodus 25:9; 26:1, 12-15, etc.; 39:32; 40:2, 29). The first occurrence of this word is in the first of these last quoted references. *Burnt sacrifices and peace offerings.* The identical words of ... 2 Samuel 6:17, 18, where the Authorized Version translates ‘burnt offerings and peace offerings.’ These were the two great sacrifices — the former speaking of atonement (... Leviticus 1:3-9, etc.), the latter of *reconciliation effected* and the enjoyment of peace (... Leviticus 3:1-5, etc.). Neither here nor in the parallel place is any mention made of the altar upon which these sacrifices were offered.”

There remain in this report of the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem many unanswered questions. We are not given any information about the tent David had prepared for the ark. In Exodus a large section is assigned to planning, preparation and execution of the project. Each part of the Old Testament Tabernacle with its three sections: the outside part, the holy chamber and the Most Holy, were strictly divided and permission to access the places was strongly restricted. The furniture had specific functions, both the altar in the outer court on which the sacrifices were burned and the golden altar in the Holy Place on which incense was burned. In the same room was the table on which the showbread was placed and there was the candlestick with its seven lamps. The Most Holy Place contained the Ark and access was limited to the High Priest only and that only on the Day of Atonement.

The place David constructed for the sheltering of the Ark seems to have served simply as a holding place, probably with the intent to place it in the temple to be constructed later.

As the Ark was placed in the tent, David brought two kinds of sacrifices: a holocaust, or burnt offering and a fellowship offering. If the law on these sacrifices, as we find them in the first chapters of Leviticus, was followed, they would have consisted of a young bull for the burnt offering and for the fellowship offering a sacrifice of flour, bread or grain. Several animals could be used for the burnt offering, according to the financial status of the person who brought the sacrifice. Poor people could even bring a couple of birds. Since the sacrifice David brought was a state affair, the sacrifice must have been the most expensive one, such as a young bull.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “The ark’s arrival results in renewed sacrificial worship, and blessings and food given to the people The various *offerings* (vv. 1-2) are brought by the people, rather than just by David as in 2 Samuel 6:17, consistent with the corporate emphasis of 15:25-29. Blessing the people (v. 2, cf. v. 43), was an activity usually carried out by priests (cf. Deut 10:8; I Chr. 23:13) but also occasionally by other leaders, notably Moses (Exod. 39:43). Apart from David, Solomon was the only other Israelite king known to have exercised this privilege (I Kgs 8:14, 55; cf. 2 Chr. 6:3). David therefore appears in a semi-priestly role, mediating temporal (v. 3) as well as spiritual blessings. The second item of food (known only here and in 2 Sam. 6:19) was either a *cake of dates* or ‘a portion of meat’ (REB, NEB, NRSV, RSV; cf. GNB, AV) – if the latter is correct, it was an especially generous act since meat rarely appeared on domestic menus in ancient Israel.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “V. 2 — *He blessed the people in the name of the Lord; i.e.* reverently in the Name of the Lord, and as vividly conscious of being in his presence, he pronounces blessings upon the people, and by short ejaculatory prayer and holy wish further begs for them those blessings which God only can give. In the time of David and Solomon (... 1 Kings 8:14) the king realized far more closely the idea of the paternal relation to the people than had ever been since the time of the patriarchs of the elder days.

V.3 — Each little clause of this verse is replete with interest. The royal giver, who now *dealt to every one of Israel*, was, after all, but a channel; yes, and only one channel, through which the fullness and the bounty of the royal Giver of every good and perfect gift, of all good whatsoever, of all things necessary to life and godliness, are supplied to every one of his creature-subjects. But it is highest honor, as servant and instrument alone, to figure forth him in any way. The second little clause tells us either that *women* took a recognized place on occasion of this joyous festival, or that the hospitality of such an occasion did not forget them and their homes. And the following three little clauses require closer examination. The word here translated ‘loaf’ in the expression *loaf of bread* is *kikar*, for which in this sense we may turn to ... Exodus 29:23; ... Judges 8:5; ... 1 Samuel 2:36; 10:3; ... Proverbs 6:26; ... Jeremiah 37:21. The corresponding word, however, in the parallel place is *challah* (for which see Exodus 29:2, 23; ... Leviticus 2:4; 7:12, 13; 8:26; 24:5; ... Numbers 6:15, 19; 15:20). The essential meaning of the former word is a *circle*, hence applied to the cake because of its shape, and of the latter word *perforation*, hence applied to the cake because it was perforated. *A good piece of flesh*. This is the Authorized Version rendering of *eshpar*, which occurs only in the parallel place and here. ... *And a flagon*. This is the Authorized Version rendering of the original *’ashiyshah* }, found in the parallel place as well as here, and also in the only other places (two in number, and in the plural) where it occurs... Song of Solomon 2:5; Hoses 3:1). But there is no doubt, or but little, that the rendering should rather be ‘dried, pressed cakes of raisins or grapes.’ ... The substantive has both masculine and feminine form in plural. The Vulgate translates *similam frixam oleo*, which means a ‘baked cake of flour and oil;’ and the Septuagint, *laganon apo tegavou* in the parallel places. But here the Septuagint reads *apton ena aptokopikon kai amoriten* as the whole account of the loaf, the good piece of flesh, and the flagon.”

b. Levites appointed at Jerusalem (16:4-7)

4 He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel:

5 Asaph was the chief, Zechariah second, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals,

6 and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.

7 That day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this psalm of thanks to the Lord:

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The two lists of Levitical appointments (here and vv. 37-42) relate to more permanent arrangements for worship required by the ark’s presence in Jerusalem (note the word *regularly*, NIV, NRSV ‘continually,’ RSV, in vv. 6, 37, 40). These verses describe a transitional stage before the temple was completed. For the time being, Israel’s worship activities and personnel were to be divided between the ark at Jerusalem (vv. 4-7, 37-38) and the tented altar at Gibeon (vv. 39-42). It has been suggested that this separation authenticated synagogue worship ..., but the whole tenor of chapters 13 – 16 towards centralization rather than dispersal of worship makes this hypothesis unlikely. In fact, it is more probable that Chronicles is underlining the value of the use of Scripture and in the sacrifice of praise alongside the required rituals. (cf. vv. 8-36).

The named *Levites* (v. 4) under *Asaph* are taken from those listed in 15:17-21; those in that list not named here were allocated to Gibeon (v. 41, *the rest of those chosen and designated by name*). The Levites’ task was to *minister* (v. 4; ‘serve,’ REB, NEB; cf. v. 37 and 15:2) before the ark, and to lead in praise especially with music (v. 4, cf. ch. 25). Three phrases ‘to invoke,’ and ‘to praise’ (v. 4, NSRV, RSV) should be understood as a collective reference to the activities of worship, according to the Hebrew custom of expressing the comprehensiveness of an idea by a series of near synonyms (cf. Prov. 1:2-6 on wisdom, Ps 119 on law) rather than as separate liturgical activities ... or types of psalm The suggestion that the first verb (Heb. *ha'zkr*, possibly ‘proclaim’) alludes to the priests’ blowing of trumpets (cf. Num. 10:9-10) is also improbable, since David is expressly appointing the Levites to new tasks. The *priests* are dealt with separately (v. 6), since the instruction that they should *blow the trumpets* (cf. 15:24) had long been established (Num. 10:2, 8-10). Their role at Jerusalem was primarily to call the people to worship, especially at festivals (cf. Ezra 3:10; Ps. 98:6), though they would also have accompanied the sacrifices mentioned in verse 1 (cf. also vv. 39-40). Trumpets certainly have a dual function in the New Testament in announcing the final resurrection (I Cor. 15:52), and playing part in heavenly worship (Rev. 11:15; not the reference to the heavenly ark in Rev. 11:19).”

It is interesting to observe that in the threefold task David gave to the Levites, making petition is the first, before giving thanks and praise to God. But that seems also to be the New Testament order. The Apostle Paul writes: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”⁴²

Another interesting detail is that *Asaph*, who was appointed to be the conductor of the orchestra, was given the task to sound the cymbals. It could be that he would thus determine the beat and rhythm of the music. As we have seen earlier, *Asaph* would be the greatest contributor to the book of Psalms, after David himself. As a matter of fact, it was David who wrote the text for the hymn to be played in the thanksgiving service.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: “*He appointed certain of the Levites to minister*. No sooner was the ark deposited in its tent than the Levites who were to officiate in the choirs before it entered upon their duties—a select number of the musicians being chosen for the service from the list (1 Chron 15:19-21) of those who had taken a prominent part in the recent procession. The same arrangement was to be observed in their duties, now that the ark was again stationary: *Asaph*, with his associates, composing the first or principal company, played with cymbals; *Zechariah* and his

⁴² Phil. 4:6

colleagues, with whom were conjoined Jeiel and Obed-edom, forming the second company, used harps and similar instruments.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “*To minister; i.e.* to officiate, as we should say, in the service before the ark. The verse seems to describe what should be the essence of that service. It was threefold — *to record, to thank, and to praise* the Lord God of Israel. The word here used for ‘record’ is ... (to remember), and is remarked upon by [one Bible scholar] as a title strictly appropriate to the character of the two psalms 38. and 70., on the head of which it stands, as meaning, ‘to make others remember’ (see also such passages as ... Exodus 20:24; ... 2 Samuel 8:16; 18:18; 20:24; ... Isaiah 43:26; 63:7). The minds of the people were to be refreshed in this service and in their very psalm of praise (so note in this sense vers. 8, 9, 12, 21, etc.), by being reminded or told, so far as the youngest of them might be concerned, of God’s marvelous and merciful deeds for their forefathers of many, many a generation. Then they were to give intelligent and hearty thanks. And, lastly, they were to offer to approach that purest form of worship which consists in adoring praise. One might imagine with what zest they would have accepted, with what fervor they would have added lip and instrument of music to it — that one verse which needed the revolution yet of nearly another three thousand years, that it might flow from the devotion or’ Adison:

‘When all thy mercies,
O my God, My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I’m lost
In wonder, love, and praise.’”

c. The Lord is king (16:8-36)

v. *Covenant promises (16:8-22)*

8 Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

9 Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

11 Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

12 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

13 O descendants of Israel his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.

14 He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

15 He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, 16 the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.

17 He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

18 "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."

19 When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it,

20 they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.

21 He allowed no man to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings:

22 "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."

David uses seven verbs to express what a relationship to God should be: “Give thanks,” “call,” “make known,” “sing,” “glory,” “look to” and “remember.” Each of these deserves a closer look.

The Hebrew verb for “give thanks” is *yadah*, which suggests the lifting up of hands. The verb “call” is *qara`* in Hebrew. It has a variety of meaning. It can refer to calling or giving a name to a person

or an object. As such we find it in the creation story where we read: “God *called* the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he *called* ‘night.’”⁴³

“Make known” is *yada`* in Hebrew. It also has a wide range of meaning. It is first used in connection with “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” But it can also have a more intimate meaning as in the verse: “And Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.”⁴⁴

“To sing” is *shiyr* in Hebrew. The verb is found for the first time in the song of Moses, when God let the whole Egyptian army drown in the Red Sea. We read: “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: ‘I will *sing* to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.’”⁴⁵

“Tell” is the translation of the Hebrew *siyach*, which can mean “to ponder” or “to utter.” The first time that verb is used is in the Song of Deborah, where she sings: “You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider the voice of the singers at the watering places. They *recite* the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts of his warriors in Israel.”⁴⁶ It has a note of victory.

The verb “glory” is the rendering of the Hebrew *halal*, meaning “to shine,” or “to boast.” The verb is first used in the story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt. We read: “And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they *praised* her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.”⁴⁷

The verb is used numerous times in the Psalms, as in David’s hymn: “I call to the Lord, who is *worthy of praise*.”⁴⁸

Samach is the Hebrew word for “rejoice.” It is first used in the context of celebration. In connection with the feast of tabernacles, we read: “On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and *rejoice* before the Lord your God for seven days.”⁴⁹

The Hebrew for “seek” is *darash*. We read that when Rebekah became pregnant with the twins Esau and Jacob, “she went to *inquire* of the Lord.”⁵⁰

“Remember” is *zakar* in Hebrew. It suggests marking something, so it will not be forgotten. Interestingly, it is used for the first time in connection with God, who would be unable to forget. We read: “But God *remembered* Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.”⁵¹

The Tyndale Commentary states about this hymn: “The psalm inserted here celebrates in faith that as the ark comes to the center of Israel’s life, so Yahweh *comes* (v. 33; or possibly ‘has come’) to his people. A belief in God’s coming to his people is reaffirmed throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Exod. 19:9; 24:11; Isa. 6:1; 59:20). God’s coming to earth in the person of Christ was therefore not totally unexpected, even though it was much opposed. Here God comes as King (v. 33) and Judge (v. 33). He is praised for his demonstrable faithfulness to his covenant people in the past (vv. 8-22), which gives the psalmist fresh confidence to ask God to *deliver us from the nations* (v. 35).

⁴³ Gen. 1:5

⁴⁴ Gen. 4:1 – (KJV)

⁴⁵ Ex. 15:1

⁴⁶ Judg. 5:10, 11

⁴⁷ Gen. 12:15

⁴⁸ Ps. 18:3

⁴⁹ Lev. 23:40

⁵⁰ Gen. 25:22

⁵¹ Gen. 8:1

The MT's introduction to the psalm emphasizes that it was David who 'first appointed' (NRSV, RSV) 'ordained' (REB, NEB) the Levites to sing God's praise, rather than that this psalm was actually sung on the occasion of the ark's arrival, despite REB, NEB's colon at the end of verse 7 (NIV's *this psalm* is not in the Heb. and is even more misleading). The form of the psalm is almost certainly the Chronicler's own compilation, as suggested by his habit of adapting material from the psalms for his own purposes (e.g. I Chr. 29:10-18; 2 Chr. 6:41-42; 20:21) and the presence of many of Chronicles' characteristic themes. It is of course closely based on parts of three Psalms, viz. 105, 96, 106, but a number of small variations make it almost certain that earlier Scripture has been reinterpreted and applied to the circumstances of the Chronicler's time. It is therefore mistaken to try to 'correct' the text in the light of that found in the Psalter, as for instance in the RSV.

The psalm's structure is based on its three constituent parts. The original pieces, however, have been welded together into an organic whole to form a new hymn of praise, as is evident from at least two factors. Regular introductions are provided for each section by repeating imperatives such as *Give thanks!* (vv. 8, 34) and *Sing!* (v. 23, cf. v. 9), while natural bonds are formed between the three sections by words such as God's *name* (vv. 8, 10, 29, 35), God's *holiness* (vv. 10, 29, 33) and *the nations* (vv. 20, 24, 31, 35)."

The convocation to praise and worship is issued exclusively to the people of Israel, who are called here: "descendants of Israel his servant," "sons of Jacob, his chosen ones." In the mention of Jacob and Israel there is a reference to Jacob's character, as the one who used to trip up people, and his victory, which made him a prince of God.

That Jacob is called God's "servant" suggests obedience and service to God. The Hebrew word used is *'ebed*, which can be rendered "slave," as in "If a man beats his male or female *slave* with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished."⁵²

Jacob was "chosen" as a link in the chain that would bring the Messiah into the world. The promise given to Eve runs as a golden thread through the whole Bible. One of Eve's offspring would crush the head of the snake.

Israel was God's chosen nation, which meant that they were called to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."⁵³ The fact that this reminder accompanied the arrival of the ark, meant that God's presence would enable them to be what they were called to be.

vi. God is king over all the earth (16:23-33)

23 Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.

24 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

25 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.

26 For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

27 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place.

28 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength,

29 ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

30 Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.

31 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"

32 Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!

⁵² Ex. 21:20

⁵³ Ex. 19:6

33 Then the trees of the forest will sing, they will sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

Verses 23-27 are addressed to creation as a whole. God ought to be praised as the Creator. The Apostle Paul states that God is known primarily as the Creator and should, therefore, be worshipped as such. We read in Romans: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”⁵⁴

Although mankind cannot deduct from creation that God is also the Savior, it is obvious that the world and universe in which we live cannot be the result of some spontaneous evolution. If there is no divine intelligence behind all we can see and experience, there would be no guarantee that we would be able to reason and understand. The fact that we are thinking and conscious individuals proves that there is thought and personality behind all that exists.

David expresses this fact in his beautiful hymn that celebrates God in creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”⁵⁵

The most amazing part of David’s proclamation in this hymn, that accompanied the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, is that he makes creation declare God’s salvation. He suggests, as Paul does, that creation has suffered from the fall. We read in Romans: “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”⁵⁶

The fact that David mentions salvation as part of God’s glory goes well beyond the recognition that there is superior intelligence behind all we can see. The tribal people of Papua, who were still living in the Stone Age only a few decades ago, knew not only that there was a Creator, they also had a moral code to which they knew they ought to be obedient. They would quote, what sounded like parts of the Ten Commandment, saying: “Stealing is sin,⁵⁷” “killing is sin,” “lying is sin.” That did not mean that they obeyed the law, but they knew it.

David’s mention of salvation as part of God’s glory demonstrates a conviction of sin and of forgiveness. David did not know the full extent of God’s plan of salvation, but he knew that the death of a sacrificial animal would provide the blood that covered his sin. Had he known about the blood of Christ, that would provide, not only a cover, but atonement for his sin,⁵⁸ he would have burst out in even greater praise than in this hymn.

⁵⁴ Rom. 1:18-21

⁵⁵ Ps. 19:1-4

⁵⁶ Rom. 8:19-22

⁵⁷ Literally: Stealing is taboo, etc.

⁵⁸ Rom 3:23-26

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Mention of divine protection leads naturally into a song about God’s universal kingship (v. 31). Like the preceding section, it begins with invitations to worship, but the greatness of the theme demands the widest possible extension. Praise is offered by *the heavens* (v. 31) and *all the earth* (v. 23), including *the sea, the fields, and the trees* (vv. 32-33) as well as the *families of nations* (v. 28). God’s kingship is demonstrated in his acts of *salvation* (v. 25), creation (v. 26), and judgment (v. 33), and is particularly relevant to contemporary Israel in his supremacy over *all the gods of the nations* (v. 26). Since in the ancient world the fortunes of nations were identified with the fortunes of their chief deities, this passage is a direct challenge to Israel’s sense of futility under imperial rule. It encourages them to renewed faith and hope by magnifying the greatness of the God who is now present at the center of national life.”

The Pulpit Commentary states: “The grandeur and unusual comprehensiveness of the adoration and homage here proclaimed, as to be offered to the omnipotent Ruler of all nations, should be well pondered. Our eye and ear may have become too familiar with it, but when put a little into relief, and referred to its original time of day, it is fit to be ranked among the strongest moral evidences of inspiration in the word and the speaker.

Ver. 23 – This verse is composed of the latter half of each of the first two verses of the psalm (96.).

Vers. 34-36 – These verses, from the first, forty-seventh, and forty-eighth of Psalm 106, must have suggested the sad intermediate contents of that psalm, the significant key-note of which is sounded in our thirty-fifth verse. The suggestion in the midst of the unbounded gladness of this day is affecting, and must have been intended for salutary lesson and timely warning. In the midst of the fullness of praise and joy, the people are led to prayer — *say ye* — and the prayer is a humble petition for salvation, union, and protection from every enemy. God’s treatment of his anointed people had been on his part one continued protection and one prolonged salvation. Yet they had often neither prayed for these nor acknowledged them. Now they are led again by the hand, as it were, to the footstool of the throne.”

In v. 23 the God is referred to as the Lord of all the earth. The Hebrew text uses the name Yahweh at this place. *Yahweh* was God’s name as the One who had revealed Himself particularly to Israel as the great “I AM.”⁵⁹ Here He is called upon as the Lord who all the nations of the earth ought to worship. The message about Him must be preached to all the nations of the earth. There is no greater missionary impulse than the one stated here!

Israel’s history of salvation, their deliverance from slavery from Egypt and their inheritance of the Promised Land is presented to the whole world as a model of salvation and blessing. The Passover lamb that saved Israel from the wrath of God and allowed them freedom from bondage becomes a reference to “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”⁶⁰

God ought to be feared “above all gods” (v. 25). The idols referred to were not only manmade deities, they were representatives of demonic power.

Vv. 27 and 28 celebrate the glory of God. “Splendor” and “majesty” is the translation of the Hebrew words *howd*, meaning “grandeur,” and *hadar*, “magnificence.” The word *howd* is first used in the consecration of Joshua as the leader of Israel, after Moses. We read: “So the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your *authority* so the whole Israelite community will obey him.’”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ex. 3:14

⁶⁰ John 1:29

⁶¹ Num. 27:18-20

Jacob used the word *hadar* to bless the tribe of Joseph, consisting of the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. He said: “In *majesty* he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth.”⁶²

The Hebrew text of v. 28 reads literally: “Give unto the Lord, [ye] kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength.” In the literal sense of the word we have no glory and strength that we could give to God. God possesses already all the glory and strength that exists. What is meant is, obviously, that we ought to recognize God’s glory and strength. The words have the same power as the words in the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”⁶³

We do not give to God what He doesn’t possess already, but we acknowledge who He is and what He has.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Several significant textual differences occur in this section. The most substantial is the changed order of several phrases in verses 30-31 (cf. Ps. 96:10-11), though this has little effect on the meaning and may simple be a textual variant. Of more interest is the replacement of ‘his sanctuary’ (Ps. 96:6) and ‘into his courts’ (Ps. 96:8) by *his dwelling-place* (v. 27) and *before him* (v. 29). These changes have often been explained as attempts to avoid anachronisms prior to the construction of the temple, but it may well be that they simply reflect the language of the context. The ark’s ‘place’ has already been prepared (15:1, 3; cf. 16:1), while the repeated phrase ‘before God/the LORD/him’ (vv. 1, 27, 33) is closely associated with the worship that took place ‘before the ark’ (vv. 4, 6, 37). As the Chronicler led his readers to praise, the place where the ark stood was less important than the one whose presence it represented.”

vii. Prayer for deliverance (16:34-36)

34 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

35 Cry out, "Save us, O God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, that we may glory in your praise."

36 Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise the Lord."

The Hebrew text of v. 34 reads literally: “O give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; forever [endures] his mercy.” The Hebrew word for “mercy” is *checed*, which the KJV often renders with “lovingkindness.”⁶⁴ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* states about *checed*: “This word is used 240 times in the Old Testament, and is especially frequent in the Psalter. The term is one of the most important in the vocabulary of Old Testament theology and ethics.”

V. 35 reads literally in Hebrew: “And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name [and] glory in thy praise.”

It is interesting to observe that God is called “God of our salvation.” The Hebrew words are *Elohim yesha`*. The suggestion is that God *is* salvation; that it is His character.

⁶² Deut. 33:17

⁶³ Matt. 6:9,10

⁶⁴ Ps. 17:7; 26:3; 36:7-10; 40:10,11; 42:8; 48:9; 51:1; 63:3; 69:16; 88:11; 89:33; 92:2; 103:4; 138:2; 143:8.

The Bible testifies that God does not want any person to be lost. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: [God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”⁶⁵ The Apostle Peter corroborates this, stating: “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” The Calvinistic idea that God predestined some people to be saved and some to be lost is nowhere found in Scripture.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Two key Hebrew words in verse 35 have been added to the original psalm, viz. *yīšēnū* (= ‘of our salvation,’ NRSV, RSV, JB; *our Savior*; NIV, REB, NEB, GNB) and *haššîlēnū* (= ‘save us,’ NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB; ‘rescue us,’ GNB, JB; *deliver us*, NIV). When these are combined with the imperatives taken over from Psalm 106:47, *Save us* (NIV, GNB, JB; ‘Deliver us,’ RSV, REB, NEB) and *gather us*, it can be seen that verse 35 has become an augmented plea for deliverance or salvation (Heb. does not distinguish between these two English words).

The reasons which have led the Chronicler to make this repeated request lie in verses 8-35 and in the events of chapters 13 – 15. He has first been encouraged by praising God for his *wonderful acts* (v. 9, cf. vv. 8-12), which in this context must refer to the great work of bringing the ark into Jerusalem (chs. 13 – 15). This is not seen primarily as David’s achievement, but as what he [i.e. God] *has done* (v. 8). A second reason for the prayer is the psalm’s emphasis on God’s supremacy over *the nations* (vv. 24, 26, 28, 33), expressed through his *judgments* (vv. 12, 14; cf. v. 33) or victories on Israel’s behalf. In the context, this must refer primarily to the final defeat of the Philistines (14:8-17). Chronicles, therefore, understands by faith that the events of the ark’s arrival (chs. 13, 15) and Israel’s victories (ch. 14) are evidence of God’s *salvation* (v. 25).

These wonderful works of God’s past salvation form the basis for making Israel’s present known to God. The request is for two things. First, the Chronicler asks God to *save/deliver* his people again and to *gather* them *from the nations* (v. 35; cf. Deut. 30:3). What exactly the Chronicler has in mind remains unspecified. It is sometimes proposed that frankness was politically inadvisable, but more probably the real thrust of the prayer is that Israel might regain its lost identity. The Chronicler’s readers were very aware of being subject to a pagan imperial power, and they needed above all to be reidentified as the people of the God who reigns over the nations (v. 31). Whether this involved a gathering from Babylonia (cf. Ezra 1 – 2, 7-8) or from the scattered villages of Judah (cf. I Chr. 9:2-34; Neh. 7:4-5; 11:1-36) cannot be decided. What matters is that Israel should have a new understanding of its status as God’s covenant people (cf. 14-18).

The second request is that Israel may have a new understanding of God: *that we may glory in your praise* (v. 35). Deliverance could happen only by God’s intervention. Again, details are not given, but the Chronicler pleads with God to show himself unmistakably as the supreme Deliverer/Savior, and to act in such a way that praise and glory could be given only to him.

The whole psalm, therefore, is much more than an illustration of the post-exile liturgical cultus ... or an establishing of the identity of Jerusalem’s cultus. It is an impassioned plea for God to restore his own and his people’s identity in the Chronicler’s own generation by performing fresh acts of salvation.

The psalm’s contemporary relevance is underlined for the Chronicler’s readers in two further ways. One is the use of Psalm 106:1, 47-48 (= vv. 34-36 here) as a prayer for God to keep his promise given in Jeremiah 33:11 that the land of Israel will be filled with praise after the exile. Secondly, there are hints in verses 35-36 that the Chronicler’s psalm was actually being used in contemporary post-exile worship. Instead of the jussive (‘let all the people say’), and imperative (‘praise’) of Psalm 106:48, there is a new imperative, ‘Say also’ (v. 35; NRSV, RSV; cf. JB, GNB; *Cry out*, NIV; cf. REB, NEB)

⁶⁵ I Tim. 2:4

followed by the statement (v. 36), *all the people said* and ‘praised’ (GNB, NRSV). It seems therefore that the people had actually responded and made the Chronicler’s prayer their own. Furthermore, the Levites appear to have provided the leadership in this matter. The words *give thanks* (vv. 34, 35) and ‘praised’ (v. 36, NRSV, RSV) are a deliberate echo of verse 4 and are a practical demonstration of the Levitical functions described there. If, as seems likely, the Chronicler is the actual compiler of the psalm, then it is probable that he too should be counted among the Levites.

Finally, the psalm provides a firm foundation for the following chapters. By affirming that God has kept his covenant promises to Abraham and Jacob (cf. vv. 15-22), it prepares the way for the Davidic covenant of chapter 17. By linking these promises with the ark, the Chronicler shows that this God is near to his people, not far away from them. Above all, the ark’s association with God’s presence gives confidence that God’s presence will also be found in the temple where the ark will be located (cf. I Chr. 21 – 2 Chr. 7). Israel can therefore be confident about God’s promises and may bring prayer and joyful praise to the place of God’s earthly presence. In the New Testament, it is the Holy Spirit who brings the sense of God’s presence and gives access to the Father in the heavenly temple (Eph. 2:18). Christians too should be encouraged to offer praise and prayer through Jesus, their own High Priest (cf. I Cor. 12:3; Eph. 5:18-20; Heb. 4:14-16).”

The hymn ends in Hebrew with the words: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever.” It seems strange that we, human beings, can bless God. The author of Hebrews states: “And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.” So, how can we bless God, who is incomparably greater than any of His creatures? The Hebrew word for “blessed” is *barak*, which has the root meaning of “to kneel.” We bless God by kneeling before Him and worshipping Him.

a. Levites appointed at Jerusalem (16:37-38)

37 David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day's requirements.

38 He also left Obed-Edom and his sixty-eight associates to minister with them. Obed-Edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were gatekeepers.

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “These verses give the now new-ordained distribution of priests and Levites, to minister and to attend to the service of praise before the ark. And the first of them may be considered to mark an important step in advance in the crystallizing of the world’s ecclesiastical institutions. Asaph and his brethren of song are *left there before the ark of the covenant... to minister before the ark continually, as every day’s work required*. A permanent local ministry and choir are thus established, with a fixity of place on Zion, and regularity of time that had been hitherto unattainable.”

The Tyndale Commentary adds: “A concluding summary about the arrangements for regular worship at Jerusalem, confirming verses 4-7. Verse 38 emphasizes *Obed-Edom’s* role, which is best understood as a dual one of musician and gatekeeper (cf. 15:18, 21, 24), though MT is awkward and uncertain. It reads literally, ‘and Obed-Edom and their brothers’ – possibly Jehiah (cf. 15:24) or Hosah has dropped out after Obed-Edom, or alternatively ‘their’ could refer to Asaph’s brothers in verse 37.”

b. Levites appointed at Gibeon (16:39-42)

39 David left Zadok the priest and his fellow priests before the tabernacle of the Lord at the high place in Gibeon

40 to present burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, in accordance with everything written in the Law of the Lord, which he had given Israel.

41 With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the Lord, "for his love endures forever."

42 Heman and Jeduthun were responsible for the sounding of the trumpets and cymbals and for the playing of the other instruments for sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were stationed at the gate.

Zadok shared the office of high priest with Ahimelech. This sounds like a strange arrangement, which was not in accordance with the original institution of the priesthood.

The Adam Clarke's Commentary comments: "Both Zadok and Abiathar were high priests at this time: the former David established at Gibeah, or Gibeon, where the ark had been all the days of Saul; and the latter he established at Jerusalem where the ark now was: so there were two high priests, and two distinct services; but there was only one ark. How long the service at Gibeon was continued we cannot tell; the principal functions were no doubt performed at Jerusalem."

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "While those above-mentioned⁶⁶ were to officiate before the ark on Zion, those mentioned in this and following verses are the officiating staff at Gibeon. It is now brought into prominence that the ark and the tabernacle are in two separate places. The great ordinary sacrifices and services, 'all that is written in the Law of the Lord,' are carefully observed on the original altar (... Exodus 38:2) in the tabernacle. Other and special sacrifices evidently were offered in the presence of the ark. The tabernacle erected in the wilderness was first stationed at Shiloh (... Joshua 18:1; ... 1 Samuel 4:3, 4). The occasion of its removal to Nob (... 1 Samuel 21:1; 22:19) is not narrated. The present passage first tells us where it had been since the slaughter of the priests at Saul's command by Doeg the Edomite. Some distinct statement, like that of ... 1 Chronicles 21:29 and ... 2 Chronicles 1:3, might have been expected here. *Zadok the priest* is given (... 1 Chronicles 6:4-9) as in the line of Eleazar."

The Tyndale Commentary states: "The reference to Gibeon is unexpected, because only Solomon is associated with worship there in pre-exilic texts (I Kgs 3:5; 9:2; cf. 2 Chr. 1:3). However, sacrifice was offered to Yahweh on various altars during the United Monarchy and later, most interestingly at Nob which was within a few miles of Gibeon and known as 'the town of the priests' (I Sam. 22:19; cf. I Sam. 21:1f; I Kgs 1:39; 2:28). The history of the Tent (or tabernacle) is also obscure, since the Old Testament locates it after the Mosaic period only at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1; Ps. 78:60; cf. Jer. 7:12) and probably also at Nob (I Sam. 21). Chronicles, however, emphasizes the continuity between Moses' Tent and this one (I Chr. 21:29; 2 Chr. 1:3), which is achieved here through David's faithfulness to the written law (cf. v. 20)."

We are told in v. 40 that the priests had to present "burnt offerings." The Hebrew word used is *`olah*, which is the word that is also used in Leviticus chapter one, where that particular sacrifice is described. Leviticus distinguishes five different sacrifices, of which the burnt offering or holocaust is the first. It seems logical to assume that in the context of our text, the word *`olah* is used for the whole gamut of sacrifices. It would be hard to believe that the priest would only bring one kind of sacrifice.

It is very interesting and meaningful that, in the context of the division of tasks, the phrase occurs which gives the reason for the whole ritual of sacrifices: "for His love endures forever." The Hebrew words are *la'owlaam chadow*, "forever His mercy." *Chadow* is the inflected form of the word *cheded*. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* states: "This word is used 240 times in the Old

⁶⁶ Viz: Obed Edom and his brothers

Testament, and is especially frequent in the Psalter. The term is one of the most important in the vocabulary of Old Testament theology and ethics.” The KJV renders it usually with “lovingkindness.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “This apparently mundane list of duties is given a vital theological ingredient: *his love endures for ever* (v. 41). This phrase, which occurs also in the psalm (v. 34), is a frequent refrain in Chronicles (e.g. 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; 20:21) showing that the central theme of Old Testament praise is the love of God. The Chronicler does not portray God as a rigid and demanding ritualist, but as one whose unending love undergirds the whole of national life. He would certainly have agreed with Paul’s dictum, ‘love never ends’ (I Cor. 13:8).

c. Blessing for David’s household (16:43)

43 Then all the people left, each for his own home, and David returned home to bless his family.

In the account in Second Samuel we read: “When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, ‘How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!’”⁶⁷

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “A brief sentence from 2 Samuel 6:19b-20a which probably functions as a conclusion to the whole ark narrative of chapters 13 – 16. The entire enterprise has ended in blessing for every Israelite home (cf. v. 3). The unsavory episode of Michal, David’s wife (2 Sam. 6b-23), is simply no longer relevant, since the dishonor of Saul’s house needs no further proof (10:13-14; 13:3; 15:29). God’s kingdom is now firmly in David’s hands, and is ready to be confirmed for ever (ch. 17).”

c. God’s covenant with David (17:1-27)

i. David’s good intentions (17:1-2)

1 After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under a tent."

2 Nathan replied to David, "Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you."

As David became king over Israel, he understood that God had elevated him to this high position. This was also recognized by Hiram, king of Tyre, who sent him material and laborers to build him a palace.⁶⁸ Once established in the luxury of royalty, David felt embarrassed about the fact that the ark, symbol of God’s presence, was located in a tent. So he consulted the prophet Nathan, who told him to do whatever was in his heart.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “We may easily imagine how the excitement, though not the deeper interest, attending the removal of the ark and the festival on occasion of its safe establishment on Zion had now subsided. David’s thoughts respecting the honor due to God and to the ark of the covenant had time to grow into convictions, and they were greatly and rightly stimulated by reflection on his own surroundings of comfort, of safety, of stability and splendor. He revolves the possible methods and the right methods of showing that honor due. The completion of his own house, one presumably fit for the permanent abode of the King of Israel (... 1 Chronicles 14:1), is the clear demonstration to him that the ark should not dwell in a mere tent. It is a true touch of life, when it is written that as *David sat in his*

⁶⁷ II Sam. 6:20

⁶⁸ II Sam. 5:11-12

house these thoughts possessed him, and so strongly. The exact time, however, here designed, and the exact occasion of his revealing the thoughts that burned within him, to Nathan, do not appear either here or in the parallel place. In the opinion of some, an indication of some interval having elapsed is found in the words (... 2 Samuel 7:1), ‘The Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies;’ while others consider those words to refer to the victories gained over the Philistines, as recorded in ch. 14. *Nathan the prophet*. This name suddenly breaks upon us, without any introduction, here for the first time. Nathan is emphatically entitled ‘the prophet,’ but perhaps merely to distinguish him from Nathan, David’s eighth son. Amid many other important references to Nathan, and which speak for themselves, must be specially noted ... 1 Chronicles 29:29; ... 2 Chronicles 9:29. And it will be noticed from the former of these references, in particular how Nathan is the prophet (*nabi*); not (like Samuel and Gad) seer (*ra’ah* ...). Possibly he is intended in ... 1 Kings 4:5. *An house of cedars*. The cedar here spoken of does, of course, not answer to our red, odorous cedar. The word employed is *haa`araaziym* in the plural number. The first Biblical use of this word is found in Leviticus 14:4, 6, 49-52. ... It is probably the *derived* signification, therefore, that should be adhered to (as in the Authorized Version), and not the original, where in ... Ezekiel 27:24, the plural of the passive participial is found, ‘made of cedar,’ The cedar genus belonging to the order Conifer, is odoriferous, very lasting, and without knots. The numerous good qualities which it possesses are spoken to in the variety of uses, and good kind of uses, to which it was put — these all crowned by the almost solitary spiritualized appropriation of the tree, found in ... Psalm 92:12. From a comparison of ... 1 Kings 5:6, 8 (in the Hebrew, 20, 22) with ... 2 Chronicles 2:3, 8, and some other passages, we may be led to believe that the *cedar* as the name of timber was used occasionally very generically. Nevertheless, the very passages in question instance by name the other specific kinds of wood. Two of the chief kinds of cedar were the Lebanon and the Deodara, which is said not to have grown in Syria, but abounds in the Himalayas. And as the use of the Lebanon cedar for some *purposes* (e.g. for the *masts* of ships) is almost out of the question, it is exceedingly probable that this *Deodars* and some other varieties of pines are comprehended under the *eh-rez*. [One Bible scholar] points out what may be described as very interesting moral *landmark* uses of the celebrated cedars of Lebanon, in those passages which speak of Solomon’s sweep of knowledge, commencing in the *dewing* direction from them (... 1 Kings 4:33), of the devouring fire that should begin with the bramble and reach high up to those cedars (in Jotham’s parable, ... Judges 9:15), and (in the parable of Joash, King of Israel, to Amaziah, King of Judah, ... 2 Chronicles 25:18) of the contempt with which the family of the cedars of Lebanon is supposed to hear of the matrimonial overtures of the family of the thistles of Lebanon. ... Cedar was the choice wood for pillars and beams, boarding and ceiling of the finest houses; and alike the first and second temples ... (Ezra 3:7) depended upon the supply of it. *Under curtains*. Here rightly in the plural, though our parallel (... 2 Samuel 7:2) shows the singular (... Exodus 26:1-13; 36:8-19).”

The Tyndale Commentary adds: “Nathan’s initial response (v. 2) is a fascinating reminder that even courageous prophets (cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-14), like godly kings, are not always infallible interpreters of God’s will.”

ii. The promise of the Davidic covenant (17:3-15)

a. Introduction (3-4a)

3 That night the word of God came to Nathan, saying:

4 "Go and tell my servant David

The Tyndale Commentary states: “Apart from the introduction and the conclusion (v. 15), which each identify Nathan’s words as a God-given prophecy, the oracle falls naturally into two preparatory sections (vv. 4b-6, 7-10a) before reaching its climax in verses 10b-14.”

b. David is not to build a temple (17:4b-6)

4b *'This is what the Lord says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.*
5 *I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt to this day. I have moved from one tent site to another, from one dwelling place to another.*
6 *Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders whom I commanded to shepherd my people, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"*

There is, in God’s message to David, as transmitted to him via the prophet Nathan, a gospel message that is very profound. So profound that neither David, nor Nathan himself could have sounded the depth of it.

There is first the reference to the exodus from Egypt. The exodus is a graphic picture of salvation and deliverance from the bondage of sin. The Israelites were saved from the wrath of God in that the angel of death, who went through Egypt and killed the firstborn male child in every Egyptian household, passed by the houses on which the blood of the Passover lamb was applied. God had said to Moses: “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”⁶⁹

The second part of the message is a reference to the coming of the Messiah. When Jesus came into the world, He “*made his dwelling among us.*”⁷⁰ The Greek word used by John is *skenoo*, which literally means “to encamp,” or “to live in a tent.” *Young’s Literal Translation* renders this verse: “And the Word became flesh, and did *tabernacle* among us.”

Jesus could say: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”⁷¹

When God became a human being, He was the poorest among the poor. Paul could write to the Corinthians: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”⁷²

The most essential part of the message is that God became man in order to conquer death for mankind by submitting to death. Nobody put this more clearly than the author of Hebrews, who wrote that Jesus “shared in [our] humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”⁷³ He lived in a tent in order to make us an eternal house.

c. God has kept his earlier promises (17:7-10a)

7 *"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock, to be ruler over my people Israel.*

⁶⁹ Ex. 12:13

⁷⁰ John 1:14

⁷¹ Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58

⁷² II Cor. 8:9

⁷³ Heb. 2:14, 15

8 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name like the names of the greatest men of the earth.
9 And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning
10 and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue all your enemies.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “A second reason for delaying the temple was to remind David that his own role as Israel’s ruler (v. 7; cf. 11:2) was bound up with God’s purposes, not his own. A succession of first person verbs in the past (vv. 7-8a, *I have ...*) and in the future tense (vv. 8a-10a, *I will ...*) confirm that David’s past achievements and his future prosperity are part of an undreamed of extension of God’s past dealing with Israel. Two promises in particular are reaffirmed to David – Abraham’s great *name* (v. 8, cf. Gen. 12:2; I Chr. 14:17) and *a place* for the descendants of Abraham and Moses (v. 9; cf. Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; Exod. 3:8; 6:8; Deut. 11:24-25), called here my people Israel (vv. 7, 9, 10). In other words, the Davidic covenant represents a new stage in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.”

God’s reminding David of his past corresponds with David’s own thoughts about where he came from and where he was now. It was the amazement of his own ascent to glory that made him wonder about God’s glory. He saw the incongruity of the fact that he lived in a palace and God lived in a tent. It ought to have been the other way around. It is the amazement of the gospel that makes us realize that we will wear the robe of glory because Christ died on the cross naked.

There is also the reminder of David’s occupation as a shepherd and the transition from herding sheep to ruling people. David had already pondered that relationship, which prompted him to write the Shepherd Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”⁷⁴

He knew that it was God’s protecting hand upon his life that made him survive Saul’s persecution. What he could not understand, however, was why God wanted him to become famous and give him a name “like the names of the greatest men of the earth.”

What God did for David, He planned to do for all of Israel. When David became king, Israel had already lived in Canaan for about four centuries. The words “I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed,” therefore, apply to more than Israel’s exodus from Egypt and conquest of Canaan. It goes even beyond the most recent establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. There must be a reference here to the role Israel will play in the end time of world history.

Wicked people have oppressed Israel in the centuries beyond David’s time, more than Egypt and Israel’s other enemies had ever oppressed her before. The pogroms and “final solutions” of the following centuries were far beyond the horizon of David’s day. Most of David’s enemies are still alive and active today.

God’s greatest promise to David was still to come.

d. God will build a house for David (17:10b-14)

10b "I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you:

⁷⁴ Ps. 23:1

11 When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.

13 I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor.

14 I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever."

The Hebrew word for "house" is *bayith*. In Hebrew, as in English, the word "house" can apply to a dwelling or to a family. We call the abode in which people live a "house." But we also say that the queen of England is a member of "the house of Windsor." When David spoke about building a house, he spoke of a material structure. God used the word in the sense of a family, or a dynasty.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "This dynasty has five main features:

(a) God will establish a kingdom and a throne for David's offspring (vv. 11, 12, 14). This is the major promise of the covenant. The ambiguity inherent in the Hebrew word *zera'* (v. 11), like its English equivalents 'seed' (AV)/offspring (NIV, NRSV, RSV), means it can apply both to the dynasty as a whole and to individual members of it (cf. the use of the same word in Gen. 3:15, 12:7; 17:7, 16).

(b) One of David's descendants will build the desired temple which will be a sign that David's throne or kingdom has been divinely established (v. 12). Like circumcision in the case of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17), building the temple is the act of human obedience by which God's covenant promise is accepted and confirmed. So the temple will glorify not David's name but God's.

(c) David's heirs will enjoy the privileged status of God's adopted sons, with Yahweh himself as their adoptive Father (v. 13). This promise which was given originally to Israel (Exod. 4:22; cf. Isa. 55:3) is now concentrated in the Davidic line (cf. Pss. 2:7; 89:27). Ultimately it leads to Jesus, in whom this promise is finally and perfectly fulfilled. In the light of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the early church constantly saw this as the supreme Old Testament promise concerning Jesus as the Son of God, frequently referring to this and similar passages (e.g. Acts 2:30; 13:22-23; Rom. 1:3-4; Heb. 1:5, 8-9; 5:5). Through Jesus too, it has amazingly been extended by adoption to every believer, so that Jesus is 'the firstborn among many brothers' (Rom. 8:29; cf. vv. 15-17).

(d) David's house will be everlasting, ultimately secured in God's love. The future of David's kingdom would be wholly different from the uncertainty and disaster that befell Saul's reign (v. 13). It is initially surprising that the clause in 2 Samuel 7:14b about human sinfulness and divine discipline has been discarded. The reason, however, is not an unawareness of the extent of human failure in the Davidic line or because royal obedience was no longer a priority. David and Solomon were still required to obey God's instructions (I Chr. 22:12-13; 28:8-9), and the Chronicler does not hide their failures (see I Chr. 13:11-12; 15:13; 21:1, 7-8, 17 for David; 2 Chr. 9:29; 10:4; 10-11, 14 for Solomon), any more than he does those of their successors on the throne. Rather, repeated failure by David's line to meet the conditions of the covenant serves only to highlight God's unconditional commitment to David's house. This in fact is the focus of the Chronicler's attention, confirming that even human sin cannot ultimately undermine or divert God's declared purposes.

(e) The most striking development of the Davidic covenant in Chronicles is its explicit association with the kingdom of God (v. 14). Evidence for this at first sight seems quite slender, involving changes of a single Hebrew consonant in each of two words in 2 Samuel 7:16 – *my house and my kingdom* for 'your house and your kingdom.' Though this might be explained as a textual variant in the Chronicler's source, such a solution is unsatisfactory in the light of other adjustments in this verse and of other passages in Chronicles where the same idea is clearly present (especially I Chr. 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chr. 13:8; cf. I Chr. 10:14; 29:11; 2 Chr. 9:8). Although the Old Testament often refers to Yahweh as king (e.g.

Exod. 15:18; Isa. 6:5; Pss 47:3; 99:2), only rarely, and almost entirely in Psalms, Chronicles and Daniel, does it specifically mention Yahweh's kingdom (e.g. Pss. 45:6; 103:19; 145:11-13; cf. Dan. 4:3; Obad. 21). It is only Chronicles, however (and possibly Ps. 45:6), which sees the kingdom of God expressed directly in the Davidic kingdom. This is a significant contribution to the development of the idea of the X kingdom of God, especially in the light of the Gospels' understanding of the revelation of the kingdom in the person of David's son Jesus (e.g. Matt. 12:28; Luke 12:32; 17:20-21).

These various elements all concern the covenant's long-term implications. In verse 14, however, a covenant promise is applied directly to an individual, again on the basis of small changes from 2 Samuel 7:16, 'I will confirm him ... his throne' (cf. *he ... will build*, v. 12 and 2 Sam. 7:13). On the other hand, the individual emphasis in the EVV of verse 11, *one of your own sons* (NIV, REB, NRSV; cf. GNG, lit. 'one who will come from your sons'), is probably not justified Although the messianic element is not entirely absent ..., it is quite restrained The oracle looks primarily to Solomon as the individual through whom the covenant is to be established, and it is for this too that David prays (vv. 23-24)."

e. Conclusion (17:15)

15 Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: "The revelation of the divine will was made to the prophet in a dream." The Hebrew word used is *chazown*, which can mean dream or vision. In the latter sense it is used in the verse "In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions,"⁷⁵ which introduced God's communications to the young Samuel.

iii. David's Prayer (17:16-27)

a. Praise for God's uniqueness (17:16-22)

16 Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"

17 And as if this were not enough in your sight, O God, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. You have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men, O Lord God.

18 "What more can David say to you for honoring your servant? For you know your servant,

19 O Lord. For the sake of your servant and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made known all these great promises.

20 "There is no one like you, O Lord, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.

21 And who is like your people Israel — the one nation on earth whose God went out to redeem a people for himself, and to make a name for yourself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt?

22 You made your people Israel your very own forever, and you, O Lord, have become their God.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "David's response illustrates two central aspects of the Chronicler's view of prayer. First, God's unconditional promises are not to be received casually, as though their advantages were automatic, but with submissive faith and thanksgiving. Secondly, for the

⁷⁵ I Sam. 3:1

Chronicler, faith is often expressed through prayer, notably in the examples of David (also 29:10-19), Solomon (2 Chr. 1:8-10; 6:14-42), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20:6-12), and Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30:18-20; 32:20, 24). Prayers are often strategic in Chronicles, especially those which introduce and conclude the temple-building narratives in the reigns of David and Solomon. Chronicles makes a closer connection between prayer and the building of the temple than Samuel or Kings (I Chr. 29:10-19 has no parallel), and seems to have specifically encouraged the thought in the post-exilic period of the temple as a ‘house of prayer’ (cf. Isa. 56:7). As in the prayer-psalm in chapter 16 and the Lord’s Prayer itself, the requests come toward the end of the prayer (vv. 23-27; cf. Matt. 6:11-13). Precedence is given to praise for God’s amazing and undeserved generosity.”

David’s reaction to Nathan’s message from God is one of utter amazement. This shows David’s genuine humility. The fact that he had become the king of Israel, God’s chosen people, had not gone to his head. His question “who am I?” indicates that David did not consider himself to be an extraordinary person, who was worthy enough to be chosen for the position.

And David could not have understood the ultimate significance of God’s promise “the Lord will build a house for you.” He could not know that he was a vital link in the chain that would bring into the world the One who would crush the head of the serpent.

Anyone who discovers that he is chosen by God’s grace will realize that it was not because of personal qualifications but because of the will of God that he or she was elected.

One of the most amazing statements in the Gospels is that God will honor those who recognize Jesus Christ as their Savior. We read: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”⁷⁶ The Father Himself will get up from the throne of the universe and greet those who enter heaven after having served Jesus on earth.

It is obvious that God’s promise to David goes well beyond the succession of the throne of Israel on earth. The line of David’s successor ended when Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah prophesied about Jehoiachin, who was on the throne of Israel at that time: “‘As surely as I live,’ declares the Lord, ‘even if you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear — to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to.’ Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Lord says: ‘Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.’”⁷⁷

When Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of David, he said: “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”⁷⁸ Jesus was not the son of David from the line of Solomon that had ruled the nation. He was David’s offspring via the line of Nathan.⁷⁹

Most of all, David would have been unable to comprehend that his kingdom was an earthly shadow of an eternal kingdom in heaven. Jesus testified to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶ John 12:26

⁷⁷ Jer. 22:24-30

⁷⁸ Luke 1:32, 33

⁷⁹ See Luke 3:31.

⁸⁰ John 18:36

The Tyndale Commentary comments furthermore on David's prayer of praise: "Three rhetorical questions, *Who am I?* (v. 16), *'What is my house?'* (v. 16, NRSV, RSV, etc.), and *Who is like your people Israel?* (v. 21), and a statement of faith, *There is no-one like you, O LORD, and there is no God but you* (v. 20), form the backbone to the first part of this prayer. The prayer is not just a conventional religious response to good news, for God's word has brought about a marked change in David's perspective. He has a new perception of his dependence (cf. v. 1), and the similar questions in the prayer of 29:14 show that this was not a passing phase. Even more importantly, an awareness has emerged of God as not only unique but without any rival (20). Both statements in verse 20 recur elsewhere – *There is no-one like you, O LORD* in the prayers of Asa (2 Chr. 14:11, EVV; v. 10, MT), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20:6) and Jeremiah (Jer. 10:6-7); *there is no God but you* in both prayer (Ps 18:32; Isa. 64:4) and divine speech (Isa. 45:51, 21; Hos. 13:4)....

The prayer confirms that the new covenant promises are also a continuation of God's eternal promises for his people in the Mosaic covenant (vv. 21-22; cf. vv. 7-8). By echoing the covenant formula, *You made your people Israel your very own for ever, and you, O LORD, have become their God* (v. 22), the past is resumed (Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12), the judgment of exile forgiven (Hos. 1:8-9; Jer. 31:33), and the future in Christ anticipated (Rom. 9:25-26; Rev. 21:3). Difficulties of translation occur at several points in these verses, as comparison of the EVV of verse 17, 19, 21 clearly demonstrates. The position is not improved by similar problems in the corresponding verses of 2 Samuel 7, and no consensus has emerged concerning a solution, though the over-all sense is only marginally affected."

In utter amazement, David says to God: "You have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men." The Hebrew word, rendered "the most exalted" is *ma`alah*, which refers to a step, as in "The throne had six *steps*, and its back had a rounded top."⁸¹ David discovered that God had put him on top of the ladder.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "David here makes a clear and very just difference between all that had been done for him, and the very great prospect now in addition put before him: *Thou... hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree; i.e.* thou hast treated me, or dealt with me, in this promise as though I had been of high rank indeed. The parallel reading is very concise (... 2 Samuel 7:19), and perhaps somewhat obscure, 'And is this the manner [or, 'law'] of man?' or, 'And this is to be a law of man,' *i.e.* this continuity of a great while to come. Elliptical as this reading may seem, there is no real difficulty in feeling its essential harmony with the passage before us. David's unfeigned surprise and joy in the '*great while to come*' nature of the promises made to him and his house overpower all else in his estimation. It is, indeed, a most opportune emphasis that he lays upon this element of the full promise, and accords exceptionally well with our later knowledge and brighter light. Our Authorized Version rendering throws out sufficiently this surprise, and gives not inadequately the drift of the passage. The continuity and exaltedness of the promise, which was only fully realized in the greater Son of David, the Christ, might well astonish David."

David's utter amazement is proof of his genuine humility. It is interesting and intriguing to observe that God's honoring of a human being, inevitably, leads to a reaction of humility. In one of his psalms, David expresses this. After looking up at the night sky, seeing the moon and the stars and realizing the vastness of the universe, David exclaims: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor."⁸² The Hebrew words, rendered "a little lower than the heavenly beings" can, alternatively, be rendered: "almost like God." The Hebrew word *me`at*, which is usually translated "a

⁸¹ I Kings 10:19

⁸² Ps. 8:4, 5

little,” appears as “almost” in the verse: “Then Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are *almost* ready to stone me.’”⁸³

And the Hebrew word *elohiym*, or *Elohim*, can refer to God, if used with the article, or to divine beings, such as angels, or even to human magistrates.

The Hebrew text of v. 20 reads literally: “Yahweh, [there is] none like you, neither [is there any] like Elohiym beside you.” The great I AM is the incomparable one. Isaiah expresses this in the words: “To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, ‘To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?’ says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”⁸⁴

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, interprets the psalm as a reference to Christ’s humiliation. We read: “But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.’ In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.”⁸⁵

David understood that the honor God gave him was related to the honor He gave to the people of Israel. God’s choice of a person or a nation conveys the highest honor that can be given to anyone.

b. Request for God to confirm his promises (17:23-27)

23 And now, Lord, let the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house be established forever. Do as you promised,

24 so that it will be established and that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The Lord Almighty, the God over Israel, is Israel's God!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you.

25 "You, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. So your servant has found courage to pray to you.

26 O Lord, you are God! You have promised these good things to your servant.

27 Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, O Lord, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever."

It was God’s promise that gave David the courage to pray this prayer. David’s words may sound strange in that he tells God to do what He promised to do. We could interpret this as a response of faith to the promise. Mary expressed the same attitude as she responded to Gabriel’s message about her bringing about the birth of the Messiah: “I am the Lord’s servant ... May it be to me as you have said.”⁸⁶

⁸³ Ex. 17:4

⁸⁴ Isa. 40:18, 22, 25, 26

⁸⁵ Heb. 2:6-10

⁸⁶ Luke 1:38

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Two requests emerge in the latter part of the prayer. The first is that God’s ‘word’ (NRSV, RSV) *promise* (NIV, GNB) should *be established for ever* (v. 25). David recognizes that the giving of the promise and its future depends on God, though from now on its success or otherwise will be bound up with the faith and obedience shown by David’s descendants. The Davidic covenant is usually described in this chapter as the *word/promise* (vv. 3, 23; cf. v. 6), but it is also called *this great thing* (v. 19), ‘this good thing’ (v. 26, NRSV, RSV), and what God has *revealed* (v. 25; cf. v. 15). Verse 23 contains a good example of prayer not always changing the circumstances but the attitude of the person who prays – ‘Do what you said’ (GNB) or *Do as you promised* (NIV) is in direct opposition to Nathan’s original advice to the king (*Do whatever you have in mind*, v.2).

The second request is that God’s name (‘*fame*,’ GNB, REB, NEB) *will be magnified for ever* (v. 24, NRSV, RSV). David has shown understandable human interest in the implications of the divine word for himself and his house (vv. 16-19, 23), but the prayer concludes, as the next will begin (29:10-13), with a concern for God’s honor. The greatness of God’s *name* through both ‘houses’ is in the end more important to David than the promise of a great name for himself (cf. v. 8).

Finally, the requests are based on the confidence that God has already begun to answer David’s prayer. God’s covenant promise is twice seen as evidence of God’s blessing, and this is the real ground of hope that the blessing will not be lost in the future. (*You have been pleased to bless ..., you ... have blessed*, v. 27 – the note of past blessing is much stronger than in 2 Sam. 7:29). The last phrase of verse 27, which now refers to Yahweh rather than to David’s house, should probably be translated, ‘For you, O Yahweh, have blessed and you are blessed for ever,’ against EVV. Ultimately God alone is to be praised.”

d. David’s empire (18:1 – 20:8)

i. David’s victories over the nations (18:1-17)

Before commenting on the Scripture text, *The Tyndale Commentary* observes: “Two major dimensions of David’s wars emerge from their present context. First, the Davidic covenant (ch. 17) is already being partially fulfilled:

- (a) David’s enemies are *subdued/defeated* (the same Heb. verb. *hiknîa’* is used in 17:10;18:1, 20:4; cf. also 18:2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12; 19:16; 20:1, 4, 5, 7, 8);
- (b) David’s *name/fame* (17:8; cf. 14:17) reaches to the nations, whose kings must make *peace* (19:19; *greet*, 18:10, is from the same Heb. root) and *congratulate* him (18:10);
- (c) by the defeat of Israel’s various neighbors, especially their traditional enemies the *Philistines*, the land becomes undisturbed (17:9; 18:1; 20:2-8; cf. 11:12-19; 14:8-16).

As a result, the preparations for the temple (chs. 21 – 29) take on a new meaning:

- (a) David’s wars are the penultimate stage by which his throne and kingdom are established (cf. 17:11, 12, 14), the process being completed by the building of Solomon’s temple (17:11-12; 22:6-10);
- (b) the ‘rest’ or peace which was a precondition for building the temple (22:9) ... is eventually achieved;
- (c) it is explained why David as a ‘man of war’ is personally unable to build the temple (22:8-9; 28:3). David is not thereby guilty Indeed, the temple will be held back until David has established peace through victories which were seen as God’s own work (18:6, 13);
- (d) an additional clause in 18:8, *which Solomon used to make the bronze Sea, the pillars and various bronze articles*, underlines David’s dedication of the spoils of war for the temple (18:11 = 2

Sam. 8:11-12, cf. I Chr. 26:26-28; 2 Chr. 5:1). A comparison between David and Joshua is probably also intended (Josh. 6:24 ...).

a. Victory over the Philistines (18:1)

1 In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath and its surrounding villages from the control of the Philistines.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: “The full extent of David’s conquests in the Philistine territory is here distinctly stated; whereas in the parallel passage, 2 Sam 8:1, it is only described in a general way. Gath was the ‘Methegammah,’ or ‘arm-bridle,’ as it is there called, either from its supremacy, as the capital, over the other Philistine towns, or because, in the capture of that important place and its dependencies; he obtained the complete control of his restless neighbors.”

The Pulpit Commentary states: “The compiler of Chronicles gives us this plain statement where, in the parallel place, we find, ‘took Methegammah,’ or more exactly, *Metheg-ha-ammah*, the explanation of which word (see ... 2 Samuel 8:1) is not yet ascertained. Its literal signification is ‘the bridle or curb of the mother city,’ and may mark a special strong position which commanded Gath, or it may describe Gath as owning itself to such a position. [One Bible scholar] understands it to mean that David ‘subjected the metropolis of the Philistines to himself,’ quoting the Arabian proverb, To give one’s bridle to any one, as equivalent to submitting to him. He quotes also ... Job 30:11. It may be noted that Ammah is spoken of (... 2 Samuel 2:24) as the name of a hill, otherwise unknown, however. Although David subdued so many places, he reigned over them, *i.e.*, over many of them, still by ‘their own kings’ (... 1 Kings 4:24; ... 2 Chronicles 9:26). Hence we find Gath with a king still in ... 1 Kings 2:39.”

The Tyndale Commentary writes: “Evidence for David’s conquest of *Gath and its surrounding villages* is found in the presence of 600 Gittites in David’s entourage (2 Sam. 15:18), even though the corresponding place in 2 Samuel 8:1 is an otherwise unknown Metheg-ammah.”

b. Victories of the Moabites (18:2)

2 David also defeated the Moabites, and they became subject to him and brought tribute.

The Hebrew text reads literally: “And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts.” *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* comments: “He smote Moab. The terrible severities by which David’s conquest of that people was marked, and the probable reason of their being subjected to such a dreadful retribution, are narrated, 2 Sam 8:2.” That Scripture reference reads: “David also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute.”⁸⁷

The Tyndale Commentary states: “David’s excessive treatment of the Moabites in 2 Samuel 8:2, as of the Edomites (I Kgs 11:16) is omitted, though for what reason is unknown. The native rulers of Gath (I Kgs 2:39-40) and Moab were not removed, though the Moabites, like the Arameans (v. 6) paid *tribute*.”

⁸⁷ II Sam. 8:2

In our commentary on the text in Second Samuel, we wrote: “It is difficult to determine what David did with some of his Moabite prisoners of war. If we interpret v.2 literally, we get the impression that the prisoners were ordered to lie on the ground and a measuring line determined who would be killed and who kept alive. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* states: “Measured them with a line may mean that he spared the little ones but killed the adults whose height approximated the length of two cords.”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary, adopting a more humane interpretation, comments: “It has been generally conjectured that David, after he had conquered Moab, consigned two-thirds of the inhabitants to the sword; but I think the text will bear a meaning much more reputable to that king. The first clause of the verse seems to determine the sense; he measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground-to put to death, and with one line to keep alive. Death seems here to be referred to the cities by way of metaphor; and, from this view of the subject we may conclude that two-thirds of the cities, that is, the strong places of Moab, were erased; and not having strong places to trust to, the text adds, so the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts, i.e., were obliged to pay tribute. The word line may mean the same here as our rod, i.e., the instrument by which land is measured. There are various opinions on this verse, with which I shall not trouble the reader.”

c. Victories over Hadadezer of Zobah (18:3-10)

3 Moreover, David fought Hadadezer king of Zobah, as far as Hamath, when he went to establish his control along the Euphrates River.

4 David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstringed all but a hundred of the chariot horses.

5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them.

6 He put garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to him and brought tribute. The Lord gave David victory everywhere he went.

7 David took the gold shields carried by the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem.

8 From Tebah and Cun, towns that belonged to Hadadezer, David took a great quantity of bronze, which Solomon used to make the bronze Sea, the pillars and various bronze articles.

9 When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer king of Zobah,

10 he sent his son Hadoram to King David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory in battle over Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Hadoram brought all kinds of articles of gold and silver and bronze.

It has been questioned whether the reference to the Euphrates River refers to the boundaries of David’s kingdom or to the borders of the kingdom of Zobah. It is true that the Euphrates is mentioned in God’s promise to Abraham, which reads: “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.’”⁸⁸

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “The main part of the chapter reports David’s victory over Hadadezer (AV, Hadarezer) of Zobah (vv. 3-10; cf. 19:16-19). Having amalgamated his native Beth-Rehob (2 Sam. 8:3) in south Lebanon with Zobah, a territory north of Damascus, Hadadezer himself ruled an empire of small Syrian states which may have extended beyond the Euphrates (cf. 19:16 and inscriptions of the Assyrian kings Shalmaneser III and Ashurdan II). He had clashed with David twice

⁸⁸ Gen. 15:18

before (19:1-15, 16-19), but this confrontation between the two most powerful kings in Syria-Palestine was his final defeat. It is not clear whether it was David or Hadadezer who set up the victory stela (v. 3, cf. NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB; lit. ‘hand’; *control*, GNB, NIV) which triggered the decisive battle. David received as spoil the cities of *Damascus* (vv. 5-6), ‘Tibhath’ (v. 8) and Berothai (2 Sam. 8:8). He retained a few *chariot horses* (v. 4), either as a royal status symbol or to supplement the first small cavalry detachment in an Israelite army, but found greater value in the *bronze* (cf. 2 Chr. 3:17 – 4:18). The word translated *shields* (v. 7, NIV, RSV, REB) is actually an Aramaic loan-word meaning ‘quivers’ (NEB). *Tou* (spelled *Toi* in 2 Sam) of Hamath (modern Hamah – on the Orontes about 120 miles north of Damascus) seems to have made a peace treaty, though his request for peace (EVV ‘greet’) and congratulations suggest the action of an inferior party (v. 9; cf. the parity treaty between David and Hiram of Tyre, 14:1-2). *Tou*’s son was probably called *Hadoram* (v. 10) rather than ‘Joram’ (2 Sam. 8:10), since the latter’s Yahwistic form is unlikely in a non-Israelite state.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the word “shields,” stating: “The shields; Hebrew *shelet*. Much doubt has been entertained as to the meaning of this word. Its etymology is uncertain. [One Bible scholar] derives it from a root signifying ‘hardness.’ For the most part, however, the context of the seven places of its occurrence which he instances (... 2 Samuel 8:7; ... 2 Kings 11:10; ... 1 Chronicles 18:7; 2 Chronicles 23. 9; ... Song of Solomon 4:4; ... Jeremiah 51:11; ... Ezekiel 27:11) favor the rendering ‘shields,’ though the quotation from ... Jeremiah 51:11 (literally, ‘fill ye the shields’) is not so satisfactory. The wealth of Zobah is, of course, illustrated by these shields of gold.”

There is some confusion about the number of chariots and horses David captured. In the parallel passage in Second Samuel, the number is given as 700, while here we read 7000.

We read also that David hamstrung most of the horses that were captured. 2 Samuel 8:3

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary writes about that: “The reason of this mutilation was, that horses being forbidden by the Mosaic constitution to the Hebrews, both in war and agriculture, it was of no use to keep them; and their neighbors, placing much dependence on cavalry, but having, for lack of a native breed, to procure them by purchase, the greatest damage that could be done to such enemies was to render their horses unserviceable in war.” The “Mosaic constitution” referred to read: “The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, ‘You are not to go back that way again.’”⁸⁹

We are told that David collected a large amount of bronze in the conquest. The Hebrew word *nechosheth* can mean brass, copper, or anything made of metal. Solomon used it in the building of the temple for the laver or washbasin. We read: “He made the Sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high. It took a line of thirty cubits to measure around it.”⁹⁰ The circumference of ten cubits would be the equivalent of approximately fifteen feet. We are not told how much brass was used in the fabrication, but it suggests a large amount.

According to *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, “The kingdom of Hamath comprehended the great plain lying on both banks of the Orontes from the fountain near Riblah to Assamea on the north, and from Lebanon on the west to the desert on the east. The ‘entrance of Hamath’ (Num 34:8), which was the north boundary of Palestine, led from the west between the north end of Lebanon and the Nusairiyeh mountains.

We are told that Hadadezer had been at war with *Tou*. David’s victory over *Tou*, therefore, meant security for Hamath.

⁸⁹ Deut. 17:16

⁹⁰ I Kings 7:23

d. David's gifts (18:11)

11 King David dedicated these articles to the Lord, as he had done with the silver and gold he had taken from all these nations: Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “In this way, the Chronicler underlines David’s involvement in the temple project in the context of existing statements about the temple as the ultimate beneficiary of David’s military activities (2 Sam. 8:11-12; I Kgs. 7:51).”

e. Victory over the Edomites (18:12-13)

**12 Abishai son of Zeruiah struck down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.
13 He put garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The Lord gave David victory everywhere he went.**

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “The parallel place⁹¹ omits to say that it was by aid of Abishai that David slew these eighteen thousand Edomites. They are there called Syrians, which reading is at all events in keeping with the Aram of the previous verse. Abishai, here named son of Zeruiah, possibly served under ‘Joab son of Zeruiah’ (ver. 15), who is spoken of (... 1 Kings 11:15, 16) as very trenchant in this Edomite war, without any mention being made of Abishai. Psalm 60 (title) probably speaks of an installment of the eighteen thousand spoken of here, as the nation now suffered all but extermination.”

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “*Abishai’s* role in Edom is attributed previously to David (2 Sam. 8:13) and to Abishai’s brother Joab (I Kgs 11:15-16; Ps. 60: title). However, all three would have had differing responsibilities in the overall chain of command, with Joab, as army commander (v. 15; 19:8-10; 20:1), and Abishai, chief of the Three (11:20-21; cf. 19:11-15; 2 Sam. 20:6-7), enjoying leading military roles. David and Joab were also involved together in the Edomite campaign (I Kgs 11:15). Edom became a province of the empire, like Damascus (v. 6), and was more strictly controlled than Moab or Zobah (cf. vv. 2, 6), though whether by means of *garrisons* (NIV, NRSV, RSV) or ‘governors’ (JB) remains uncertain (v. 13 – the word is rightly restored in v. 6).”

f. David's cabinet (18:14-17)

**14 David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.
15 Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;
16 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Shavsha was secretary;
17 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were chief officials at the king's side.**

The Hebrew text of v. 14 reads literally: “So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people.”

Six people are mentioned by name as the ones that formed David’s cabinet. David’s sons all received a position in the government.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “The ‘cabinet’ had three ‘departments,’ with two military officers, two in charge of administration, and four priests. The pattern of administration sketched here is

⁹¹ II Sam. 8:13, 14

usually thought to be modeled on Egyptian practice, the *recorder* (NIV, NRSV, RSV; ‘secretary of state,’ REB, NEB) acting either as ‘spokesman, herald’ or in charge of protocol, and the *secretary* (NIV, NRSV, RSV, JB; ‘adjutant-general,’ REB, NEB) responsible for official correspondence. Others have sought Canaanite analogies, but native Israelite developments should not be discounted. In the military section, *Joab*, successor to Abner (cf. 2 Sam. 3:6-39) and briefly displaced by Amasa (2 Sam. 19:13-20:13), was David’s chief general, and *Benaiah* was over the bodyguard of Cherethite”

Joab became commander-in-chief of the Israelite army because of his role in the capture of Jerusalem. We read earlier: “David had said, ‘Whoever leads the attack on the Jebusites will become commander-in-chief.’ Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, and so he received the command.”⁹² Joab was utterly faithful to David, but he was a scoundrel, who had no moral restraints as far as keeping his superior position. David was unable to disengage himself from his general, mainly because Joab had helped David to cover up his sin with Bathsheba by arranging the murder of Uriah.⁹³ David delegated Joab’s demise to Solomon, saying: “Do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.”⁹⁴ Solomon did have Joab executed.⁹⁵

The Kerethites and Pelethites, in other versions spelled as Cherethites and Pelethites, were non-Israelites, who formed David’s bodyguard. They were probably Philistines. That supposition is based on Zephaniah’s prophecy, which reads: “Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. ‘I will destroy you, and none will be left.’”⁹⁶ Some Bible scholars believe that they may have originated from the island of Crete.

ii. David’s victories over the Ammonites (19:1-20:3)

a. First victory under Joab (19:1-15)

iii. Ammonite insults (19:1-5)

1 In the course of time, Nahash king of the Ammonites died, and his son succeeded him as king.

2 David thought, "I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me." So David sent a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father. When David's men came to Hanun in the land of the Ammonites to express sympathy to him,

3 the Ammonite nobles said to Hanun, "Do you think David is honoring your father by sending men to you to express sympathy? Haven't his men come to you to explore and spy out the country and overthrow it?"

4 So Hanun seized David's men, shaved them, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away.

5 When someone came and told David about the men, he sent messengers to meet them, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, "Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back."

⁹² I Chron. 11:6

⁹³ II Sam. 11:14-21

⁹⁴ I Kings 2:6

⁹⁵ I Kings 2:29-34

⁹⁶ Zeph. 2:5

The Ammonites were somewhat related to the Israelites. They were the descendants of Lot through an incestuous relationship of one of Lot's daughters.⁹⁷ King Nahash had been kind to David at the time when David was fleeing from Saul. Their friendship may have been based on the fact that Saul was their common enemy.

When Nahash died, David sent a delegation to offer his sympathy to Nahash' son, who had ascended to the Ammonite throne.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "The friendship between David and *Nahash*, the Ammonite king, is probably best explained by their common hostility toward Saul (cf. I Sam. 11; 14:47). The existence of an Ammonite-Israelite treaty may be implied by *kindness* (v. 2, Heb. *hesed*), but the reference is to reciprocal action rather than a state of formal relations (I Kgs 5:1 suggests Israel and Tyre had a more permanent treaty relationship)."

One of the reasons David's sending this delegation to Ammon was interpreted wrongly, may have been, as some Bible scholars suggest, that David had sent ambassadors to Jabesh-Gilead when they honored Saul by given him a decent burial. Jabesh-Gilead had been Amon's enemy.⁹⁸ If, however, the Ammonites feared an Israelite invasion, the best guarantee to avoid this was not to antagonize David by the treatment they gave to his delegation. To embarrass a group of men who ought to have had "diplomatic immunity" amounted to an invitation of war, if not a declaration.

The parallel text in Second Samuel reads: "So Hanun seized David's men, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away."⁹⁹

In its commentary on the parallel passage in Second Samuel, *The Adam Clarke's Commentary* states: "The beard is held in high respect in the East: the possessor considers it his greatest ornament; often swears by it; and, in matters of, great importance, pledges it. Nothing can be more secure than a pledge of this kind; its owner will redeem it at the hazard of his life. The beard was never cut off except in mourning, or as a sign of slavery. Cutting off half of the beard and the clothes made the men look ridiculous and made them look like slaves. What was done to these men was an accumulation of insult."

And to cut off part of their clothing, exposing the men's private parts was more insulting than sending them away completely naked.

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "The parallel place makes the resemblance close, in that it tells us that 'one-half of their beards' was shaved. To shave them was an affront to their customs, dignity, and religion: to shave them half added mockery; and to cut off half their garments completed the tale of ignominious and contemptuous insult (... Isaiah 20:4). The beard was held almost in reverence by Easterns."

David sent a message to his ambassadors to stay in Jericho till their beards had grown back. It is understood that their clothing had been taken care of without any royal command.

iv. Preparations for war (19:6-9)

6 When the Ammonites realized that they had become a stench in David's nostrils, Hanun and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents of silver to hire chariots and charioteers from Aram Naharaim, Aram Maacah and Zobah.

⁹⁷ Gen. 19:38

⁹⁸ See I Sam. 11.

⁹⁹ II Sam. 10:4

7 They hired thirty-two thousand chariots and charioteers, as well as the king of Maacah with his troops, who came and camped near Medeba, while the Ammonites were mustered from their towns and moved out for battle.

8 On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men.

9 The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance to their city, while the kings who had come were by themselves in the open country.

The Ammonites must have realized that they had acted stupidly by antagonizing David and the nation of Israel. They were not ready for war on their own, so they hired soldiers and “tanks” from neighboring countries.

The Hebrew text of v. 6 reads literally: “When Hanun and the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, and sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots horsemen Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maacah, and out of Zobah.”

The Ammonites did not what Jesus would later recommend, saying: “Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”¹⁰⁰ The wise thing to do for Ammon would have been to “ask for terms of peace.” An apology would have been in order.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “The Ammonites realized that they had literally ‘made themselves stink’ (v. 6), a word used for decaying animal or vegetable matter (e.g. Exod. 7:18, 8:10; 16:20; Isa. 50:2) and applied metaphorically where relationships had totally collapsed (e.g. Gen 34:30; I Sam. 27:12; 2 Sam. 16:21). They therefore formed a temporary coalition with various Aramean states, most, if not all, subject to Hadadezer of Zobah (cf. 18:3-6), and *hired* Aramean troops. The price, *a thousand talents of silver* (v. 6), was substantial, and, though not in the MT of 2 Samuel 10:6, is well supported in an early MS of Samuel Chronicles has simplified the names of the four Aramean states involved (cf. 2 Sam. 10:8). Only *Maacah* (vv. 6-7) on Israel’s north-east boundary (Deut. 3:14; Josh 12:5; 13:11) and *Zobah* (v. 6; cf. 18:3-6) reappear from Samuel with ‘Beth Rehob’ and ‘Tob’ replaced by the vaguer *Aram Naharaim* (v. 6, NIV, REB, NEB; ‘Mesopotamia,’ NRSV, RSV). Both Israelite (v. 8) and Ammonite/Aramean forces (vv. 7, 9) gathered at *Medeba*, a city mentioned on the ninth century Moabite Stone. Being some distance south-west of Ammon on the King’s Highway, it has sometimes been considered an error for ‘waters of Rabbah’ ..., but Medeba may be connected with a struggle for control of the King’s Highway or with Joab’s Edomite and Moabite campaigns (18:2, 12-13). The Aramean *kings* were in the *open country* (v. 9) indicating the forefront of the battle, while the Ammonite troops in the rear guarded the city, either Medeba or the Ammonite capital Rabbah.”

The Living Bible modernizes the price the Moabites paid, putting it on \$ 2,000,000. That must have been an astronomical amount for that time. But then, the number of chariots and riders, given as thirty-two thousand, made it a substantial army. In modern war an army with such a number of tanks would be considered a super power. The odds in this war were clearly against Israel.

v. Victory under Joab (19:10-15)

10 Joab saw that there were battle lines in front of him and behind him; so he selected some of the best troops in Israel and deployed them against the Arameans.

¹⁰⁰ Luke 14:31, 32

11 He put the rest of the men under the command of Abishai his brother, and they were deployed against the Ammonites.

12 Joab said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to rescue me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will rescue you.

13 Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what is good in his sight."

14 Then Joab and the troops with him advanced to fight the Arameans, and they fled before him.

15 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans were fleeing, they too fled before his brother Abishai and went inside the city. So Joab went back to Jerusalem.

Medeba changed hands several time in Old Testament times, but in the days of David it must have been under Ammonite control. That was probably the city in front of which the Aramean army positioned itself for battle. But since we read that Joab found his army surrounded in front and back, the Arameans were also able to send troops to the rear of the Israelites.

Fighting a war at two fronts is always a most undesirable condition in which any army can find itself. It was Nazi Germany's undoing, at during the Second World War, to have to have to face the Russians in the east and the Allied British and American troops in the west. Such was the Israelite condition at this battle. Joab understood how precarious his situation was. So he divided his troops in two, facing the Ammonites up front and the Arameans in the back.

The Tyndale Commentary writes: "Each Israelite division was first encouraged to give mutual support, *for our people and the cities of our God* (v. 15). The latter phrase is unique in the Old Testament, perhaps suggesting a Davidic origin for the similar, but more familiar, epithet of Jerusalem, 'city of (our) God' (Pss. 46:4; 48:1, 3; 87:3; cf. 'city of Yahweh,' Ps. 101:8; Isa. 60:60:14; also Ps. 48:9). ... Secondly, Joab motivated his troops with either a promise (*the LORD will do what is good in his sight*, cf. NRSV, RSV) or a prayer ('The LORD's will be done,' GNB, REB, NEB) for divine help – for similar encouragements, see 2 Chronicles 19:11; 32:7-8. The answer to prayer was immediate. The Arameans (v. 14) and Ammonites (v. 15) both *fled*, apparently without a fight, as soon as the Israelite army took the offensive. The author may intend this as an illustrative echo of the promise given the Jehoshaphat, 'The battle is not yours, but God's' (2 Chr. 20:15; cf. Exod. 14:14). His brother Abishai (v. 15, NIV, REB, NEB) is rather distant from its antecedent – the original may have read 'Abishai, Joab's brother,' as NRSV, RSV."

Joab was not known as a "religious person." His immoral behavior at some instances indicates this. His pious remarks may have been more intended to install trust in God among his troops than an expression of his own faith. Joab must have realized that people who trusted in a "superior power" are better fighters than those who trust in their own strength. A more modern example is General Patton's prayer at the invasion of Nazi Germany during WWII. The opening words of his prayer in front of his troops, "Lord, this is Patton speaking ..." have become famous.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on v. 10: "The meaning in brief of this verse is that, as Joab found there were practically two enemies, and two armies to face, he avoided the mistake of being shut up between them more than necessary, and divided his own hosts. He took the flower of all, under his own command, to face the Syrians in the field, who were the most formidable of the enemy. The rest he put under his brother Abishai, to face the Ammonites at the gate, *i.e.* of the city Medeba. The plan succeeded, for if Abishai had only done as much as hold back the Ammonites awhile, so soon as they saw the Syrians break and flee they knew that Joab and his army would be free to 'help' Abishai."

a. Second victory under David (19:16-19)

16 After the Arameans saw that they had been routed by Israel, they sent messengers and had Arameans brought from beyond the River, with Shophach the commander of Hadadezer's army leading them.

17 When David was told of this, he gathered all Israel and crossed the Jordan; he advanced against them and formed his battle lines opposite them. David formed his lines to meet the Arameans in battle, and they fought against him.

18 But they fled before Israel, and David killed seven thousand of their charioteers and forty thousand of their foot soldiers. He also killed Shophach the commander of their army.

19 When the vassals of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became subject to him. So the Arameans were not willing to help the Ammonites anymore.

Evidently, the Israelite victory in the battle of Medeba was not decisive enough to end the Aramean threat.

V.16 indicates that the Arameans occupied a large area, or at least that they had some people, related to them, living as far away as Mesopotamia. The "river" mentioned in this verse is the Euphrates.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "Joab's success was not conclusive. A second battle was required to end the coalition (v. 19). Even after that, there was further conflict before both the Arameans (18:3-8) and the Ammonites (20:1-3) finally capitulated. Aramean reinforcements were sent from 'beyond the Euphrates' (v. 16, NRSV, RSV) to restore Hadadezer's dented pride, but the earlier result was confirmed as the Arameans again *fled* (v. 18; cf. vv. 14-15). This battle may have been located at 'Helam' (2 Sam. 10:16-17), a name possibly concealed in the phrase 'came to them' (v. 17, NRSV, RSV; advanced against them; NIV; Heb. *h'mh* for *lhm*), though neither reading is beyond dispute. Shophach, the general of Hadadezer's army (vv. 16, 18; 'Shobach,' 2 Sam. 10:16, 18) is not known elsewhere.

Final victory over the Arameans is attributed to David (vv. 17-19; cf. 20:2-3), here leading *all Israel* (v. 17) a favorite combination in Chronicles (cf. 11:3; 12:38; 15:28; 18:14), but already present in Samuel in this instance."

There is some confusion about the numbers in this text and in the parallel passage in Second Samuel, which reads: "David killed seven hundred of their charioteers and forty thousand of their foot soldiers."¹⁰¹ Some Bible scholars attribute this to corruption of the text by copiers.

The Pulpit Commentary suggests: "Seven thousand men which fought in *chariots*. The parallel passage has the men of seven hundred chariots. There could not be ten fighting men to a chariot. The reading of Samuel is more likely to be correct than our present reading. *Forty thousand footmen*. The parallel place shows 'horsemen.'"

The defeat of the Amorites made them subject to David's rule. The Hebrew word used is *'abad*, which sometimes refers to slavery.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "*Peace* was agreed on terms set by *David* ('Israel,' 2 Sam. 10:19), though apparently without payment of tribute (cf. 18:2, 6). *Not willing* is more emphatic than Samuel. The Arameans' will to *help* the Ammonites had been broken as a direct consequence of the Israelites' 'help' (v. 12, twice, NRSV, RSV, GNB; *rescue*, NIV – all these occurrences are from the same Heb. root) for each other. Equally important, however, was that Israel's troops were willing to fight God's battles (cf. Ps. 110:3) because of their confidence that God would do *what is good in his sight* (v. 13)."

¹⁰¹ II Sam. 10:18

b. Final victory (20:1-3)

1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, Joab led out the armed forces. He laid waste the land of the Ammonites and went to Rabbah and besieged it, but David remained in Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah and left it in ruins.

2 David took the crown from the head of their king — its weight was found to be a talent of gold, and it was set with precious stones — and it was placed on David's head. He took a great quantity of plunder from the city

3 and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes. David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then David and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.

It was during this war with the Ammonites that David committed his crime in ordering the death of Uzziah in order to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba. The author of Chronicles does not mention this. His reference to the time “when kings go off to war,” and “David remained in Jerusalem,” raises the question as to why David did not participate personally in this important battle. It is understood that the readers know the answer to this.

The time of the year when kings would normally engage in warfare is given as “in the spring.” The Hebrew text reads literally: “And it came to pass after the year was expired . . .,” which, evidently refers to the beginning of the new year. *The New Living Translation* states in a footnote: “The first day of the year in the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar occurred in March or April.” *The Pulpit Commentary* adds: “The series of feasts, beginning in spring and ending in autumn, regulated the year. The *sacred* year began with the new moon that became full next after the spring equinox; but the *civil* year at the seventh new moon.”

It sounds strange to us that a nation would put a certain time of the year on its calendar at which to engage in warfare, but that seems to have been the case. The weather pattern of Palestine may have had something to do with this.

No specific reason is given as to why David did not go with his troops in this campaign against Ammon. The purpose for this particular expedition was the insult the Ammonites had loaded upon David’s ambassadors by treating them as spies, cutting off their beards and part of their clothing.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: “Joab ravaged their country, invested their capital, Rabbah, and having, after a protracted siege, taken one part of it, the lower town or ‘city of waters,’ insulated by the winding course of the Jabbok, he, knowing that the fort called ‘the royal city’ would soon fall, invited the king to come in person, and have the honor of storming it.”

Joab could have added points to his own honor by capturing the city, but instead, he invited David to lead the final assault in order to receive the credit. Joab may have felt that David needed a boost of morale after the affair with Bathsheba. But this we are not told.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “While we read here that Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it, the parallel place, now shifted to . . . 2 Samuel 12:27-29, tells of Joab’s generosity (if it were this, and not fear or possibly somewhat tardy obedience to strict commands given on his commission), in his message to David, to repair to the spot immediately and share the glory of the reduction of the city, or be its nominal captor. . . . And, once more, while we read here that *Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it*, and yet read in the parallel place of the delay and the visit of David (with which the very first clause of our ver. 2, ‘And David took,’ etc., is in perfect accord) and of David’s nominal taking of the city, we find probably the just and inartificial explanation of all this in . . . 2 Samuel 12:26-29. There we read

more particularly that Joab sent word he had taken the ‘city of waters,’ *i.e.* the lower part of the city (where a stream had its source, and no doubt supplied the city with water), which was very likely the key of the whole position, and called upon David to come up and ‘encamp against the city and take it,’ *i.e.* the city, or citadel, which stood upon the heights north of the stream. Glimpses of this kind may suffice to convince us how rapidly a text, really correct, would melt away for us a very large proportion of the whole number of the lesser obstacles which often impede our path in the historical books of the Old Testament. *At the time that kings go out.* It was no doubt the case that, even in Palestine, the winter was often a period of enforced inactivity. *Rabbah.* The punishment of Ammon for the treatment of David’s well-intended embassy of condolence is now about to be completed. The familiar root of Rabbah signifies multitudinous number, and, resulting thence, the greatness of importance. It was the chief city of the Ammonites, if not their only city of importance enough for mention.”

We do not read what happened to the Ammonite king. We are only told that his crown was taken. There is, however, some confusion about that also. *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* states: “Crown of their king ... weight a talent of gold - equal to 125 lbs. Some think that Malcom, rendered in our version ‘their king,’ should be taken as a proper name, Milcom, or Molech, the Ammonite idol, which, of course, might bear a heavy weight. But, like many other state crowns of Eastern kings, the crown gotten at Rabbah was not worn on the head, but suspended by chains of gold above the throne.”

The Tyndale Commentary writes, not without a touch of humor: “The crown (v. 2) belonged either to the Ammonite king (NIV, NRSV, RSV) or, with some of the VSS (LXX, Vulg.), to the chief Ammonite deity ‘Milcom’ (GNB, REB, NEB). Its chief features were (a) distinctive precious stone(s) and its weight (c. 30 kg). Hebrew syntax that the crown rather than the jewel (again GNB, NEB) was placed on David’s head, though its heaviness must have made any act of coronation quite brief!”

The Hebrew text of v. 3 gives the impression that David treated the people of Rabbah with unusual cruelty. It reads literally: “And the people that [were] in it, he brought out and cut [them] with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes.” The NIV softens this considerably with: “and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes.” The parallel passage in Second Samuel reads: “He took a great quantity of plunder from the city and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brick making.”¹⁰² Most of the problem in this text lies in the Hebrew verb used.

The Tyndale Commentary completes this section by commenting: “David’s rule over Ammon seems to be part of a complex four-stage system of administration of the empire outside the land of Israel. Zobah was in a straightforward state of vassalship (19:10), but control was tightened increasingly by imposing tribute on Moab (18:2, cf. v. 6) and garrisons or governors in Damascus and Edom (18:6, 13). Ammon was most restricted of all, apparently demoted to provincial status. The Philistines’ role is unclear. Although Gath suffered a heavier defeat than all the other Philistine cities, it was allowed to keep its native ruler (I Kgs 2:39-40). The Philistines as a whole remained subject to Solomon (2 Chr. 9:26) and did not trouble Israel again for well over a hundred years (2 Chr. 21:16).”

vi. Victories over the Philistines (20:4-8)

4 In the course of time, war broke out with the Philistines, at Gezer. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the Rephaites, and the Philistines were subjugated.

¹⁰² II Sam. 12:30, 31

5 In another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

6 In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot — twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha.

7 When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.

8 These were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.

This section covers, evidently, a period of time in which various battles and scrimmages with Philistia occurred. The NIV introduces this section with “In the course of time.” The KJV renders it: “And it came to pass ...” The Hebrew word used is *hayah*, which refers to a certain condition in a variety of applications. The first time *hayah* appears in Scripture is in the verse: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”¹⁰³

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The account of David’s wars is completed by three cameos taken from the Philistine wars. All three incidents are probably associated with David’s assault on Gath (18:1), since two of his three opponents came from that city (vv. 5, 6, 8). The Philistine warriors are also all called ‘Rephaites’ (RSV) or *descendants of Rapha* (‘giants,’ NRSV), who were one of the pre-Israelite groups in Canaan (e.g. Gen. 15:20) and famous for their size (cf. v. 6). These people were known elsewhere as the ‘Avvites’ (or Avvim), whom the first Philistines had driven out (Deut. 2:23, where Caphtorites, i.e. Cretans, certainly = Philistines), and as the ‘Anakites’ (or Anakim), who had also presumably been overrun by the Philistines since Joshua removed them from all but three Philistine towns, including Gath (Josh. 11:22).

This section has several links with other passages. It shares with 20:1-3, for example, the idea that David’s soldiers rather than David himself are the real heroes. This emphasis on joint leadership is all the more significant since the Philistines had been Israel’s most intractable enemy for decades. A link also exists with the Davidic covenant. The addition of were *subjugated* (‘defeated,’ GNB) in v. 4 (cf. 2 Sam. 21:18) strongly suggests that defeating the Philistines is seen as a fulfillment of God’s promises in 17:10, where the same Heb. word occurs. There is even a connection with the time of Joshua. Describing the Philistines as the Rephaites or the descendant of Rapha (vv. 4, 6, 8) identifies them as the descendants of those who had struck terror into Moses’ spies (cf. Num. 13:28-23; Deut. 1:26-29; 2:10-23). Only now had fear finally turned to faith, as David and his men completed Joshua’s conquest at last, an achievement which was possible only because God had kept his promise (cf. 17:11-14; 14:17).”

Bible scholars have argued over the meaning of v.5. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “In Samuel Jair appears as *Jaare*. This Elhanan is probably different from him of ... 1 Chronicles 11:26. There is a strange confusion in the reading of this and its parallel verse. If our present verse is to stand corrected by accepting from its parallel ‘the Bethlehemite’ in place of our *Lamhi*, then either we have no name given for the brother of Goliath, the Gittite; or, if we drop the word ‘brother’ (changing the ‘*ach*’¹⁰⁴ of Chronicles into the *yaliyd*’¹⁰⁵ of Samuel), and make Goliath the Gittite the man slain by Elhanan, then of such a Goliath we know nothing, and it is a most unlikely coincidence of name with the conquered of David’s sling.”

The Tyndale Commentary furthermore observes: “The crucial word ‘Bethlehemite’ is also suspicious, since this form is used elsewhere only of Jesse (I Sam. 16:1, 18; 17:58; MT *bêth hallahmî* ;

¹⁰³ Gen. 1:2

¹⁰⁴ brother

¹⁰⁵ sons

Elhanan of Bethlehem, 2 Sam. 23:24 = I Chr. 11:26, possibly a separate person, uses a different form), and may therefore be an inferior reading to Lahmi. It is quite feasible to think of a confrontation between Elhanan and Lahmi, perhaps in association with David's offensive against Gath as a revenge for Goliath's death."

e. David's preparation for the temple (21:1 - 29:30)

i. David's sin and God's grace (21:1 - 22:1)

a. The census (21:1-6)

1 Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.

2 So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are."

3 But Joab replied, "May the Lord multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

4 The king's word, however, overruled Joab; so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem.

5 Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.

6 But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him.

A comparison between this account and the one in Second Samuel shows a different source that led to David's temptation for giving orders to hold a census. We read in Second Samuel that God incited it because His "anger burned against Israel."¹⁰⁶ Here Satan is mentioned as the one who suggested the thought to David.

From our historical perspective it is difficult to understand why a plebiscite would be considered a sin. It seems to us to be one of the fundamental tasks of a modern government to know the number of inhabitants of a country.

There even was a provision for a plebiscite in the Law of Moses. We read: "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the Lord. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord. The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the Lord to atone for your lives."¹⁰⁷

The reason for which David's idea to have a count was considered sinful, may have been that the people were not required to pay the amount prescribed in the law, or that David wanted to experience a sense of glory in knowing exactly how large the group was over which he was ruling. David's pride may have been the main issue.

¹⁰⁶ II Sam. 24:1

¹⁰⁷ Ex. 30:12-15

Barnes' Notes comments: "As the books of Scripture are arranged in our Version, Satan is here for the first time by name introduced to us. He appears not merely as an 'adversary' who seeks to injure man from without, but as a Tempter able to ruin him by suggesting sinful acts and thoughts from within. In this point of view, the revelation made of him here is the most advanced that we find in the Old Testament.

The difficulty in reconciling the statement here, 'Satan provoked David,' etc. with that of Samuel, 'the Lord moved David,' etc. (2 Sam 24:1) is not serious. All temptation is permitted by God. When evil spirits tempt us, they do so by permission (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31, etc.). If Satan therefore provoked David to number the people, God allowed him. And what God allows, He may be said to do."

The Tyndale Commentary comments on the appearance of the name "Satan" in this context. We read: "Satan is mentioned directly only three times in the Old Testament (see Job 1 – 2; Zech. 3:1-2), and only here as a proper name (elsewhere it has the definite article, and means 'The Opponent, Adversary, Enemy'). His origin is nowhere discussed, except perhaps for a hint in Isaiah 14:12-15, and identification with the snake is not made until the late first century AD (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). The Old Testament is interested mainly in his function, which is always to oppose God, rather than his origin or his identity. His activity is actually quite restricted, and he is always powerless against God's intervention. Although he appears more frequently in the New Testament, he is equally restrained there too, as supremely expressed in his final defeat at Christ's death (John 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15; etc.)."

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary adds: "In the act of taking the census of a people there is not only no evil, but much utility. But numbering Israel—that people who were to become as the stars for multitude—implying a distrust of the divine promise, was a sin; and though it had been done with impunity in the time of Moses, at that enumeration each of the people had contributed 'half a shekel toward the building of the tabernacle,' that there might be no plague among them when he numbered them (Ex 30:12). Hence, the numbering of that people was in itself regarded as an undertaking by which the anger of God could be easily aroused; but when the arrangements were made by Moses for the taking of the census, God was not angry, because the people were numbered for the express purpose of the tax for the sanctuary, and the money which was thus collected. 'The atonement money' (Ex 30:16), appeased Him. Everything depended, therefore, upon the design of the census The sin of David numbering the people consisted in its being either to gratify his pride, to ascertain the number of warriors he could muster for some meditated plan of conquest, or, perhaps, more likely still, to institute a regular and permanent system of taxation, which he deemed necessary to provide an adequate establishment for the monarchy, but which was regarded as a tyrannical and oppressive exaction—an innovation on the liberty of the people—a departure from ancient usage unbecoming a king of Israel."

Interestingly, Joab shows more spiritual insight in the matter than David. Joab understood that the census would make the people guilty. The Hebrew word he used is *'ashmah*, which is the word found in Leviticus for the sin of a priest as representative of the nation.¹⁰⁸

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "It was, no doubt, a very radical element of David's sin in this matter that he was thinking of the nation too much as *his* own servants, instead of as the servants of his one Master. The Lord ever knows who are his, and numbers not only them and their names, but their every sigh, tear, prayer. *A cause of trespass*. This clause may be explained as though *trespass* was equivalent to the consequences, *i.e.* the punishment of trespass. This, however, rather tends to explain away than to explain a phrase. More probably the deeper meaning is that, in the fact of the numbering, nation and king would become one in act, and would become involved together in indisputable sin.

¹⁰⁸ Lev. 4:3

Though there were no unfeigned assent and consent in the great body of the nation to the numbering, yet they would become participators in the wrong-doing. It would further seem evident, from Joab addressing these words to the king, that it was a thing familiarly known and thoroughly understood that the course David was now bent on following was one virtually, if not actually, prohibited, and not one merely *likely* to be displeasing to God on account of any individual disposition in David to be boastful or self-confident. Otherwise it would be scarcely within the province of Joab either to express or suppose this of his royal master.”

David made his command to Joab an executive order, which the general was forced to obey. Joab came back with a total of one million one hundred thousand. There is another interesting feature in the story that mentions the inclusion of a total for the tribe of Judah, David’s own tribe, of seventy thousand. These totals differ from the numbers given in the parallel passage of Second Samuel.

It becomes clear that the numbering was not a plebiscite of the nation as a whole. Only men of fighting age were numbered.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “It seems in the fact that it was the purpose to which a census was put that provides the clue to its meaning. Though the context of David’s action was a military one, he seems to have forgotten that the people were not his but God’s. His self-centered motive expressed itself in one or more of the following errors: (i) he did not raise half-shekel poll-tax mention in the Mosaic law, an omission which might result in a plague (Exod. 30:12); (ii) he failed to recognize that God’s people could not ultimately be numbered because of the nature of God’s promise (v. 3; 27:23-24); (iii) whereas all other Old Testament censuses anticipated a particular God-given purpose, this one seems to have been an end in itself. Even Joab recognized that God might yet *multiply his troops a hundred times* (v. 3), and Solomon also accepted that Israel could not be counted because they were the Lord’s people (I Kgs 3:8). Ironically, David’s action resulted in a severe reduction of Israel’s numbers (v. 14).”

On the last phrase of this section, which mentions that the tribes of Levi and Benjamin were not included in the census, *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* comments: “The rabbis give the following reason for this: Joab, seeing that this would bring down destruction upon the people, purposed to save two tribes. Should David ask, Why have you not numbered the Levites? Joab purposed to say, Because the Levites are not reckoned among the children of Israel. Should he ask, Why have you not numbered Benjamin? he would answer, Benjamin has been already sufficiently punished, on account of the treatment of the woman at Gibeah: if, therefore, this tribe were to be again punished, who would remain?”

Barnes’ Notes adds: “The omission of Benjamin must be ascribed to a determination on the part of Joab to frustrate the king’s intention, whereby he might hope to avert God’s wrath from the people.”

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “The important contents of this short verse are not found in Samuel, so that we can borrow no light thence. But Benjamin was ‘the least of the tribes’ (... Judges 21:1-23), and [one Bible scholar] has suggested that God would not permit the numbers of either of these tribes to be lessened, as he foresaw that they would be faithful to the throne of David on the division of the kingdom. Others think that the omission of these tribes in the census may have been due to Joab’s recall to Jerusalem before the completion of the work, and to the king’s repentance in the interim cutting off the necessity of completing it. This little agrees, however, with the resolute tone and assigned reason contained in this verse.”

b. A second choice (21:7-14)

7 This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel.

8 Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

9 The Lord said to Gad, David's seer,

10 "Go and tell David, 'This is what the Lord says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.'"

11 So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what the Lord says: 'Take your choice:

12 three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the Lord—days of plague in the land, with the angel of the Lord ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me."

13 David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

14 So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead.

There are several problems in this section to which no answers are given. The first one is that David was the guilty party, but God's intent appears to be that Israel would receive the punishment.

The second is that the three options of punishment that were put before David would not affect him personally.

Another textual problem is that in that parallel section in Second Samuel, the Hebrew text states "seven years."¹⁰⁹ The NIV has "three," evidently to balance the number with the text in First Chronicles, but states in a footnote that the Hebrew has "seven."

David comes under conviction of sin, even before the prophet Gad announces God's punishment. David recognized the enormity of his sin. The Hebrew text reads literally: "I have sinned greatly," and "I have done foolishly." David asks for forgiveness, using the Hebrew verb *`abar*, which can mean "to cover." It is the verb found in the context of the original Passover in Egypt where we read: "When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will *pass over* that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down."¹¹⁰

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "David's confession (v. 8) is stronger than in Samuel, the simple acknowledgment *I have sinned greatly* (cf. 2 Sam. 12:13) being supplemented by 'the iniquity of thy servant' (RSV) and 'I have done very foolishly' (NRSV, RSV). The reality of judgment is not diminished by his confession, however. David is faced with a choice of punishments all associated with breaking God's covenant (cf. Lev. 26:25-26), and between which there seems little to choose (vv. 11-12).

Against the darkness of judgment, David's plea makes God's mercy shine all the brighter (v. 13). This mercy (Heb. *rahāmîm*) refers to God's undeserved love arising from his deep compassion. David's position in verse 13 is actually parallel to that in verse 1, but, where he had previously chosen to increase God's judgment, he now fall back on the possibility of hidden hope in God's heart. Because David's discovery is actually based on God's nature as a merciful God, it is in fact a permanent hope."

David's answer to Gad is a very moving one. The Hebrew text of v. 13 reads literally: "And David said unto Gad, [I am] in a great strait: now let me fall in the hand of the Lord: for very great [are] his mercies: but into the hand of man let me not fall."

The Hebrew word, rendered "mercy" is *racham*, which can also mean "womb." It suggests the emotions of a mother for her unborn baby.

¹⁰⁹ II Sam. 24:13

¹¹⁰ Ex. 12:23

Putting himself back into the hand of the Lord would leave open the options of a famine or a plague. God chose the plague, probably because that would allow considerable limitations to the time involved. A famine would be caused by failure of the harvest, involving several months. The plague covered (only) three days.

c. God's and man's repentance (21:15-17)

15 And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the Lord saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the Lord was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

16 David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown.

17 David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O Lord my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

The Hebrew text of v. 15 reads literally: "And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, he beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, [It is] enough, now stay your hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." The Hebrew word for "repent" is *nacham*, which literally means "to sigh." We find the verb in the same context in the verse: "The Lord *was grieved* that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain."¹¹¹

It is difficult for us to understand how the eternal God could change His mind. But there is a note of great comfort for us in the fact that human suffering can make a difference in the way God punishes or forgives.

The Adam Clarke's Commentary gives an interesting quotation from the Targum, which reads: "And the WORD of the LORD sent the angel of death against Jerusalem to destroy it; and he beheld the ashes of the binding of Isaac at the foot of the altar, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, which he made in the Mount of Worship; and the house of the upper sanctuary, where are the souls of the righteous, and the image of Jacob fixed on the throne of glory; and he turned in his WORD from the evil which he designed to do unto them; and he said to the destroying angel, Cease; take Abishai their chief from among them, and cease from smiting the rest of the people. And the angel which was sent from the presence of the Lord stood at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel. This sentence is followed in the parallel place by 'from the morning even to the time appointed.' It has been suggested that 'the time appointed' may mean the time of the evening sacrifice, and that God shortened thus the three days to a short one day. There seems nothing sufficient to support the suggestion, unless it might lie in the 'repenting' of the Lord, and his 'staying' of the angel's hand, in ver. 15. *There fell of Israel seventy thousand men.* The whole number of Israel, including women, must have reached near to five millions. On this assumption, the sacrifice of life for Israel would be something like 14 percent, or fourteen in the thousand. V. 15 — *And God sent an angel.* It is at this point *first* that any mention of an *angel* is found in the parallel place, but then not in the present form, but in a sentence which would seem

¹¹¹ Gen. 6:6

to presuppose the knowledge of the agency of an angel on the occasion: ‘And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil’ (... 2 Samuel 24:16). *Stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan*. The verb ‘stood’ is employed here quite generically. It does not imply that the angel stood on the ground; for see next verse, in which it is said that he ‘stood between the earth and the heaven,’ the Hebrew verb being exactly the same. *Ornan* is the uniform form and spelling of the name in Chronicles. In Samuel, however, the name appears as ... *Araunah*.”

It is not clear whether David was the only one who saw the angel or whether the elders also saw him. The fact that both David and the elders were wearing sackcloth indicates that there was a meeting in which prayers of repentance were sent up to heaven. We may assume that God’s “repentance” was the result of these prayers.

The vision of the angel made them all fall down on their faces. But it was David who prayed, confessing to be solely responsible for the counting of the army personnel. David’s prayer for the people is deeply moving. He calls them “sheep,” which in this context refers to their complete innocence.

David pleads with God to limit punishment only to himself and his house. There is some resemblance with Moses’ prayer for the people of Israel when they had made the gold calf. Moses prayed for forgiveness for the people, saying: “But now, please forgive their sin — but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”¹¹² The difference is that Moses was not guilty, but he was willing to take the blame.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “David’s own response (v. 17) is further repentance, finally accepting full personal responsibility for the census. As before (vv. 5, 6-8), Chronicles accentuates the point – the three phrases *Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? O LORD my God,* and *Do not let this plague remain on your people* are not in Samuel. The reading, ‘I, the shepherd who did wrong’ (v. 17, NEB ...) is now often preferred to ‘done very wickedly’ (NRSV, RSV, cf. NIV) on the basis of the LXX of 2 Samuel and 4WSam, and may be superior, though it is not supported in MSS of Chronicles. ‘Ornan’ (vv. 15ff, NRSV, RSV) is the regular post-exilic pronunciation of *Araunah* (NIV, GNB) a Jebusite name which 2 Samuel 24 was unable to spell consistently!”

d. A new altar (21:18-27)

18 Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord.

20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves.

21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

22 David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price."

23 Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this."

24 But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

25 So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site.

¹¹² Ex. 32:32

**26 David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of offering.
27 Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.**

The answer to David's prayer comes in the form of a message given to the prophet Gad by the angel of the Lord. It is generally understood that this angel is the pre-incarnate Christ, as He appears in the Old Testament.

The message is that David must build an altar at the place where the angel, who was in charge of the punishment, was standing. Araunah and his sons were threshing wheat when they saw the angel and they hid from him, obviously fearing for their lives.

Araunah is called a Jebusite, which suggests that he was one of the original inhabitants of Canaan, living in Jebus before it fused with Salem into the city of Jerusalem. His dwelling place was on Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham had brought the aborted sacrifice of Isaac. According to Second Chronicles, it was the place where ultimately the temple was built. We read: "Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David."¹¹³

David arrived at the threshing floor of Araunah while the angel in charge of the plague was still standing there. Araunah came out of his hiding when he saw the king. He greeted David, as a subject was supposed to greet a king, prostrating himself, bowing down with his face to the ground.

Whether Araunah was actually willing to give up his threshing floor without any charge is doubtful. He may merely have given the king the polite answer that was expected according to the culture of that time. But it could also be that Araunah, having seen the angel of death, was willing to give up everything for free in exchange for his life and the lives of his sons.

David's answer has become a classic phrase for all human surrender to God: "I will not sacrifice an offering that costs me nothing."

David paid six hundred shekels of gold, which according to the NIV amounted to 15 lbs. of gold. *The Living Bible* renders this as \$. 4,300. One problem with this text is that, in the parallel passage in Second Samuel, we read: "David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them."¹¹⁴ *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* suggests as solution for this discrepancy: "At first he bought only the cattle and the threshing instruments, for which he paid 50 shekels of silver (2 Sam 24:24); afterward he purchased the whole property, mount Moriah, on which the future temple stood." That may be the most logical suggestion to solve this apparent difference.

David built an altar on Araunah's threshing floor and brought as sacrifices an unspecified number of burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. The Hebrew names for these sacrifices are *`olah*, for "burnt offering," and *shelem* for "peace offering," or "fellowship offering." Both kinds are prescribed in the first chapters of Leviticus.¹¹⁵ The remarkable character of both kinds of sacrifices is that they were not brought in order to atone for any sinful acts. They were considered to be acts of worship and as expressions of gratitude for received blessings.

Some Bible scholars suggest that the burnt offering was brought as an expression of gratitude for the cessation of the plague. But the text states clearly that God only gave the order to stop the carnage after the sacrifice was brought. We could consider David's sacrifice to be an act of faith, thanking the Lord for what He was going to do.

¹¹³ II Chron. 3:1

¹¹⁴ II Sam. 24:24

¹¹⁵ Burnt offering – Lev. 1, 7; peace offering – Lev. 3, 7.

David received a clear and unmistakable answer that God accepted his sacrifices by the fact that the fire on the altar was lit from heaven.

e. A new house of God (21:28 – 22:1)

28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.

29 The tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had made in the desert, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon.

30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord.

22:1 Then David said, "The house of the Lord God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "A brief theological supplement (cf. 10:13-14; 14:17) explains why Israel's major sanctuary was transferred from Gibeon (cf. 16:39-42) to Jerusalem. Worship was suspended only temporarily at Gibeon (cf. 2 Chr. 1:3-13) because of *the sword of the angel of the LORD* (v. 30), but the consequences were irreversible. David had actually been barred from Gibeon because he was *afraid* (cf. 13:12) and unable *to enquire of God*. The latter phrase is synonymous with 'seeking' in Chronicles and refers generally to expectant worship. It was a fundamental requirement of God-pleasing kingship, and David's inability to seek God disturbed the pattern of his entire reign David therefore drew his own conclusions from this and from the special events at Jerusalem (*when David saw ...*, v. 28; *then David said ...*, 22:1), especially because *the LORD had answered him* (v. 28). Having seen his prayers answered and his sacrifices accepted, the site had already become a 'house of prayer' and 'a temple for sacrifices' cf. 2 Chr. 7:13; Isa. 56:7). The appropriate response was to build a new *house* and a new *altar* (22:1)."

The most amazing feature of this particular incident is that God turned that, which was originally a punishment for sin, into an eternal blessing. It was the plague and its consequences that brought about the revelation of the place God had chosen to be worshiped. Moses had stated:

"You are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you."¹¹⁶

This prefigures the cross of Christ by which God turned the shamefulness of human sin into a symbol of His glory.

ii. David's initial preparations for the temple (22:2-19)

a. Preparing workers and materials (22:2-5)

2 So David gave orders to assemble the aliens living in Israel, and from among them he appointed stonecutters to prepare dressed stone for building the house of God.

¹¹⁶ Deut. 12:5-7

3 He provided a large amount of iron to make nails for the doors of the gateways and for the fittings, and more bronze than could be weighed.

4 He also provided more cedar logs than could be counted, for the Sidonians and Tyrians had brought large numbers of them to David.

5 David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the Lord should be of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations. Therefore I will make preparations for it." So David made extensive preparations before his death.

The Hebrew word rendered "aliens" in the NIV is *ger*, which originally means "a guest." The word occurs for the first time in Scripture in what God says to Abraham: "Know for certain that your descendants will be *strangers* in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years."¹¹⁷

It seems strange that no Israelites but foreigners were recruited for the preparation of the stones that were needed for the construction of the temple. The main reason may have been that they had an expertise that was not found among the Israelites. Foreigners had built David's palace for the same reason.¹¹⁸ It may also be that the Israelites found that stonecutting was labor that was "below them."

On the other hand, or maybe better, seen from above, from God's perspective, the whole world population, not only Israel, ought to be involved in preparing a place for God's revelation on earth.

David had intended to build the temple himself, but God had told him that he was not allowed to do it. But God had not forbidden him to make preparations. And David exploited that freedom to the uttermost. Thus the temple would become, in a sense, as much David's project as Solomon's. David made the blueprint and provided all the material.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the "strangers" David employed for the gathering of building material: "These are plainly called in the Septuagint 'proselytes' (*tous proselutous*). They were, of course, foreign workmen, who came in pursuit of their trade. The injunctions as to 'strangers,' and with regard to showing them kindness, are very numerous, beginning with ... Exodus 12:19, 48, 49; 22:21 (20); 23. 9; ... Leviticus 19:10, 33, 34; 15:14-16; ... Deuteronomy 10:18, 19; ... Joshua 8:33-35. It was not David's object merely to gain cheap or compulsory work (... 2 Chronicles 2:17, 18), but to obtain a skill, which immigrants from certain places would possess, in excess of that of his own people (... 2 Chronicles 2:7, 8, 13,14), especially considering the absorption of Israel in the pursuit of war, which had so largely impeded their study and practice of these the arts of peace."

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "The phrase *to build the house of God*, which with small variations occurs nine times (vv. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 19), is the dominant theme of chapter 22. From now until the end of Chronicles' account of David, everything will be directly concerned with the temple. The context also shifts from David alone to David and Solomon, since the building of the temple is really a joint project.

The precise topic in this chapter is preparation and provision. The verb 'to make preparations, provide' (Heb. *bēkîn*) occurs five times in connection with the necessary materials and workforce (vv. 3, 5, 14), but the chapter is equally about the preparation of Solomon, the temple builder. David's speech to Solomon (vv. 6-16), the centerpiece of the chapter, deals with three distinct but essential elements of preparation:

- (a) God's preparation of David, Solomon, and Israel through his covenant promise (vv. 7-10);
- (b) Solomon's need for self-preparation through obedience to God (vv. 11-13); and

¹¹⁷ Gen. 15:13

¹¹⁸ II Sam. 5:11

(c) the provision of sufficient materials and skilled workmen (vv. 14-16)
Secondly, David's handover to Solomon is modeled on elements of Moses' appointment of Joshua (especially Deut 31; Josh. 1)."

b. Preparing the temple builders (22:6-16)

The Tyndale Commentary observes: David explains in three stages why and how the temple is to be built:

- i. *The temple fulfils God's promise (22:7-10)*
- ii. *Special instruction for Solomon (22:11-13)*
- iii. *David's provision for Solomon (22:14-16)*

6 Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel.

7 David said to Solomon: "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God.

8 But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.

9 But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign.

10 He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

11 "Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God, as he said you would.

12 May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God.

13 Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.

14 "I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them.

15 You have many workmen: stonecutters, masons and carpenters, as well as men skilled in every kind of work

16 in gold and silver, bronze and iron-craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you."

When God said to David that he would not be allowed to be the temple builder but that his son would be the one, David concluded from this that Solomon would carry out the project of constructing a building of stone, adorned with gold and other precious materials.

But God had much more in mind than the erection of a building on earth. We read in the prophecy that Gad passed on to David: "When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever."¹¹⁹ The temple in God's

¹¹⁹ I Chron. 17:11, 12

vision would be the body of believers that would come into being through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the actual Son of David and the real temple builder.

The Apostle Peter understood God’s prophecy to David better than either Gad or David could have understood it. He wrote in his First Epistle: “As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”¹²⁰

As far as the temple in Jerusalem was concerned, it would be a shadow of the real place of His revelation God planned to construct on earth. Jesus would be both the cornerstone and the whole temple. Jesus would say to the people of His time: “‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”¹²¹

We are the stones of which that temple is built in as much as we are members of the body of Christ.

God had told David that he was unqualified to build a temple for His Name, as a place of His revelation on earth, because of all the blood he had shed. That message indicates what God thinks about death. Death is more loathsome to God than it is to us. We have grown used to death to the point where we consider it to be “natural.” Since death means, in principle, separation from God, it is the most unnatural part in His present creation. God is the God of life and as such death cannot exist before Him. Jesus would say to the people of His time: “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”¹²²

When David passed on the prophetic word to Solomon, he told him that God intended him to be a man of peace and rest. The Hebrew words used are *shalom*, (peace) and *sheqet* (tranquility). Solomon’s name, *Shlomoh* in Hebrew, has the root word *shalom* in it. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* writes: “The name ‘Solomon’ is derived from the root meaning ‘to be quiet’ or ‘peaceful,’ and Solomon was certainly the least warlike of all the kings of Israel or Judah... His name in Hebrew compares with Irenaeus in Greek, Friedrich in German, and Selim in Arabic.”

On the basis of the prophetic Word, as David understood it, he blessed Solomon. “May you have success” is the rendering of a single Hebrew word *tsalach*, which literally means “to push forward.” The first time the word occurs is in the story of Eliezer who was sent by Abraham to find a wife for his son Isaac. As he arrived at the place from which Abraham originated, he was at a well and prayed for God’s guidance.¹²³

The implication of David’s words is that Solomon ought to put his trust in the Lord for the successful carrying out of his task. Solomon must have understood this, since he later composed this proverb: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”¹²⁴

David prays for his son that God would give him “wisdom and understanding.” The Hebrew words are *sekel* and *biynah*. Those divine qualities would be needed for Solomon to “keep the law.” We need the help of the Holy Spirit in order to be obedient to the will of God.

¹²⁰ I Pet. 2:4

¹²¹ John 2:19-22

¹²² Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38

¹²³ See Gen. 24:10-21.

¹²⁴ Prov. 3:5, 6

Solomon must have remembered his father's words when he prayed the Lord to give him wisdom.¹²⁵

The Hebrew text of the last part of v. 13 reads literally: "be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed." The Hebrew words used are *chazaq* (strong), *'amats* (alert), *yare'* (fear) and *chathath* (prostate, or confusion/fear). The first time we find *chazaq* in Scripture is in the story of Lot's flight out of Sodom. We read: "When he hesitated, the men *grasped* his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them."¹²⁶ It is also used for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the Exodus story.¹²⁷ But that cannot be the context in which David uses it.

'Amats can also have the negative meaning of being obstinate, as in "But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the Lord your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart *obstinate* in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done."¹²⁸ But that also cannot be the meaning it has in this context. It rather suggests perseverance.

Yare' is the word Adam used after he sinned and said to God: "I heard you in the garden, and I was *afraid* because I was naked; so I hid."¹²⁹

Chathath is the word Moses used in connection with Israel's conquest of Canaan. He said: "See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be *discouraged*."¹³⁰

In v. 14 David tells Solomon what he had prepared in terms of building material for the construction of the temple. This indicates that David was extremely wealthy. We could call him a multi-millionaire. *The New Living Translation* renders this verse: "I have worked hard to provide materials for building the Temple of the Lord—nearly 4,000 tons of gold, 40,000 tons of silver, and so much iron and bronze that it cannot be weighed. I have also gathered timber and stone for the walls, though you may need to add more."

Added to this David had conscripted a large workforce to carry out the work. There would be no reason for Solomon to be frustrated about this building program.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: "David's final command to his son is, 'Arise and be doing!' (v. 16, RSV). This raised the question whether the events of I Chronicles 22, 28 – 29 belong during the period of David and Solomon's co-regency (cf. 23:1; I Kgs 1:20, 37, 43-48). Although David's physical weakness (I Kgs 1:1-4) might seem to rule out placing the strong leadership described in these chapters in the last phase of his reign, several factors do seem to support such a reconstruction. The decisive point is that it is impossible to envisage the central role given to Solomon in Chronicles 22, 28 – 29 as taking place before the confused circumstances which culminated in Adonijah's failed *coup*. Solomon's future had been neglected before his dramatic coronation decisively settled the succession issue. In any case, David's activities in I Chronicles 22, 28 – 29 are not inconsistent with old age. He is described only as making speeches (I Chr. 22:6-19; 28:1-10, 19-20; 29:1-5), praying (29:10-20), handing over the temple plans (28:11-18), and initiating the brief period of fund-raising for the temple (29:1-9). To complement Chronicles' account, the earlier record portrays David carrying out his instructions in the last stage of his reign with customary vigor (I Kgs 1:28-35). Also, if it is correct to

¹²⁵ II Chron. 1:7-12

¹²⁶ Gen. 19:16

¹²⁷ Ex. 4:21, etc.

¹²⁸ Deut. 2:30

¹²⁹ Gen. 3:10

¹³⁰ Deut. 1:21

regard I Chronicles 22 – 29 as an expansion of David’s last words in I Kings 2:1-12, it is likely that Chronicles has carried over the basic assumption that Solomon has been made king. It appears, therefore, that Chronicles has made a significant contribution to the record of David’s last years.”

c. Preparing Israel’s leaders (22:17-19)

17 Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon.

18 He said to them, "Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side? For he has handed the inhabitants of the land over to me, and the land is subject to the Lord and to his people.

19 Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the Lord."

Whereas the previous verses recount David’s instructions to Solomon in private, this section deals with a meeting of David with all the leaders of Israel. The text gives no information as to who those leaders were. The Hebrew word used is *sar*, which can mean “captain,” “chief,” “governor,” or anybody in charge. In this case it may refer to David’s cabinet ministers.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “The occasion at which David addressed *all the leaders of Israel* (v. 17) is unspecified, and may or may not be part of the general assembly of chapters 28 – 29 (for the leaders, cf. 28:1, 8).”

The phrase “Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side?” is a typical Hebrew construction of a statement put in the form of a question. It is not a question but a confirmation. According to *Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, the Targum reads: “Is not the WORD of the Lord your God your assistant?”

The “rest” David refers to is the fruit of victory of Israel’s enemies who inhabited the Promised Land. As Israel was in the desert going toward Canaan, God said to Moses: “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”¹³¹

The Tyndale Commentary observes about David’s words: “David again (cf. v. 9) stresses in three distinct ways that the *rest* (v. 18; ‘peace,’ GNB, NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB) which Israel enjoys is a God-given precondition for the building of a sanctuary (v. 19; cf. 28:1). With two of Chronicles’ characteristic phrases, the leaders are challenged to participate with Solomon, so continuing into Solomon’s reign the positive qualities associated with his father. They are to *help* (v. 17) Solomon, a term which strongly evokes Israel’s help for David (I Chr. 12:1, 17, 18, 21, 22), and they must *seek the LORD* (v. 19) as David had sought him (cf. 13:3; 14:10, 14). David explains how to seek (‘devote your heart and soul’; cf. REB, NEB, JB) and what it meant in practice (*Build the sanctuary*). As elsewhere, ‘seeking’ is an act of obedience rather than a search for guidance, and David will yet again underline its importance (I Chr. 28:8-9). The future temple will serve a double function (v. 19): to house the *sacred articles*, especially *the ark*, and to exalt the *Name of the LORD* before the people (vv. 7, 8, 10; 28:3; 29:16; cf. 2 Chr. 7:16; 28:8-9; 33:4, 7).”

iii. The Levites prepare for the temple (23:1 – 26:32)

a. Solomon appointed king (23:1)

¹³¹ Ex. 33:14

1. When David was old and full of years, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.

It is assumed that David, being “old and full of years” made him around seventy at his point. The expression “full of years” had suffered from some “devaluation.” When the term was used for Abraham, it referred to one hundred seventy-five.¹³² Isaac, to whom the same is applied, died at the age of one hundred eighty.¹³³

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The blanket statement that *David ... made his son Solomon king* covers a multitude of sins (for a detailed account of the political intrigues, see I Kgs 1). That verse is not intended to be understood chronologically, since Solomon’s anointing and coronation took place before the events of chapter 22 Yet it is not simply to be merged with I Chronicles 29:22 (‘They acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time’). Its primary purpose seems to be to show that the organization of priests and Levites was a consequence of God’s covenant promise to David. The temple and its personnel were not to be regarded as an independent religious establishment, but as a symbol of the two ‘houses’ of chapter 17, and ultimately of the kingdom of God.”

b. Census of Levites (23:2-6a)

2 He also gathered together all the leaders of Israel, as well as the priests and Levites.

3 The Levites thirty years old or more were counted, and the total number of men was thirty-eight thousand.

4 David said, "Of these, twenty-four thousand are to supervise the work of the temple of the Lord and six thousand are to be officials and judges.

5 Four thousand are to be gatekeepers and four thousand are to praise the Lord with the musical instruments I have provided for that purpose."

6 David divided the Levites into groups corresponding to the sons of Levi

The Pulpit Commentary introduces this section with the following: “This chapter is the first of four employed on the subject of the Levites and the services distributed among them. The twenty-four orders of priests, sons of Aaron, occupy ch. 24. The twenty-four orders of the singers and musicians occupy the contents of ch. 25. And the divisions of the porters, with their gates; and of those Levites who had the keeping of the treasures of the house of God; and the officers and judges, fill up ch. 26. After which the compiler is again awhile clear of the Levitical tribe.

Returning to our present chapter, it gives an account of the numbers of the Levites, of their classification, of David’s fresh arrangement of them and fresh distribution of their work (vers. 1-6). But altogether the largest portion of the chapter (vers. 6-32) is occupied with the rehearsal of the heads of houses composing the four Levite families, and their offices.”

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments on the number of Levites: “*The Levites were numbered ... thirty and eight thousand* - four times their number at the early census taken by Moses.... It was in all likelihood this vast increase that suggested and rendered expedient that classification, made in the last year of David’s reign, which the present and three subsequent chapters describe.”

¹³² Gen. 25:7,8

¹³³ Gen. 35:28, 29

The Tyndale Commentary states: “Although at first sight, the conducting of a census seems to contradict chapter 21, one must bear in mind that it is the aim of a census which gives it validity or otherwise. Since this census enabled David to establish a pattern for worship in the temple, it is consistent with other divinely inspired censuses in the Old Testament....

Those counted were over thirty years old (v. 3), though they were subsequently employed at twenty (see also vv. 24, 27). In view of the numbers of Levites recorded in the following chapters (e.g. 288 musicians, 25:7-31; nine-three gatekeepers, 26:8-11), the figure of *thirty-eight thousand* is best understood as thirty-eight groups or clans. Three of the four sections (vv. 4-5) are dealt with in more detail in chapters 25 – 26, but in reverse order, according to their proximity to the priests (24:1-19) and to the temple. Only the first section, the *twenty-four thousand* or twenty-four clans (v. 4) are not specifically mentioned later, though their activities are probably covered in 23:28-31. It is unlikely that the function of this largest section was only *to supervise* temple activities, though that is the usual meaning of this verb (e.g. I Chr. 15:21; 2 Chr. 34:12; Ezra 3:8-9). In this context, ‘to administer’ (GNB) is a preferred translation. The reading ‘I have made’ (v. 5, NRSV, RSV, *I have provided*, NIV) follows the MT but requires the addition of *David said* (v. 4). A much simpler change is the reading of LXX (A), Vulg. *viz*, ‘he made’ (NEB, JB; cf. GNB). The terms *divided* (NIV, etc) and ‘*divisions*’ (v. 6, NRSV, RSV, etc), which can also mean ‘allotted’ and ‘allotment,’ are one indication that the Levites’ appointment to their task is modeled on the allotment of land to the tribes in the book of Joshua (e.g. Josh. 13:7; 14:5).”

Although we do not read that David had specific divine revelations regarding the way the temple construction and services ought to be organized, we may assume that the whole plan was not merely the product of David’s imagination. Like Moses, who was told to make the tabernacle and its furniture “according to the pattern shown you on the mountain,”¹³⁴ David must have seen something of the original in heaven of which the temple on earth was to be a copy.

c. Clans of Levites (23:6b-23)

6b Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

7 Belonging to the Gershonites: Ladan and Shimei.

8 The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the first, Zetham and Joel — three in all.

9 The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel and Haran — three in all. These were the heads of the families of Ladan.

10 And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Ziza, Jeush and Beriah. These were the sons of Shimei — four in all.

11 Jahath was the first and Ziza the second, but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons; so they were counted as one family with one assignment.

12 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel — four in all.

13 The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart, he and his descendants forever, to consecrate the most holy things, to offer sacrifices before the Lord, to minister before him and to pronounce blessings in his name forever.

14 The sons of Moses the man of God were counted as part of the tribe of Levi.

15 The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer.

16 The descendants of Gershom: Shubael was the first.

¹³⁴ Ex. 25:40; 26:30 etc.

17 The descendants of Eliezer: Rehabiah was the first. Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous.

18 The sons of Izhar: Shelomith was the first.

19 The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third and Jekameam the fourth.

20 The sons of Uzziel: Micah the first and Isshiah the second.

21 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish.

22 Eleazar died without having sons: he had only daughters. Their cousins, the sons of Kish, married them.

23 The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder and Jerimoth — three in all.

In this section we find ourselves in the same situation as in the opening chapters of First Chronicles in which long lists of genealogy are given. It may be difficult to find food for the soul in these lists. We refer to the remarks of J. Sidlow Baxter in his book *Explore the Book*, who stated that these lists were a reminder to the Jews who returned from exile who might have forgotten their roots and divine election. Those, who had returned to the Promised Land for the purpose of rebuilding the place of God's revelation on earth, needed to be reminded where they came from in order to know where they were going.

The Tyndale Commentary writes about this section: "The Levites are divided into three traditional clans, the Gershonites (vv. 7-11), the Kohathites (vv. 12-20), and the Merarites (vv. 21-23) – for similar lists see Exod. 6:17-25; Num. 3:17-37; I Chr. 6:16-30. Apart from the special case of Moses' descendants (vv. 14-17), each family is represented by three generations. First come the names of Levi's three sons, followed by his eight grandsons, viz two sons each of *Gershon* and *Merari*, and four of *Kohath*. The third generation, however, bears little resemblance to the other lists (e.g. the sons of *Izhar*, v. 18, and *Uzziel*, v. 20 are quite different in Exod. 6:21-22). The names are certainly those of *heads of families* (vv. 9, 24; 'father's houses,' RSV), but it is not clear which generation they represent. The lack of harmonization between the twenty-two families here (nine Gershonite, nine Kohathite excluding the Aaronites, and four Merarite) and twenty-four groups of priests (24:7-18) and of musicians (25:7-31) suggests they are from a different date from the main list in chapters 23 – 26, and there are some indications that they may be earlier rather than later. The series of personal notes about lack of sons (vv. 11, 17, 22) point in this direction, as does the reappearance of some names in 26:20-32, where *Shubael* (v. 16; cf. 26:24) and *Jeriah* (v. 19; cf. 26:31-32) in particular both precede David by several generations at least."

d. Groups of Levites (23:24 – 26:32)

iv. Levites at the temple (23:24-32)

24 These were the descendants of Levi by their families — the heads of families as they were registered under their names and counted individually, that is, the workers twenty years old or more who served in the temple of the Lord.

25 For David had said, "Since the Lord, the God of Israel, has granted rest to his people and has come to dwell in Jerusalem forever,

26 the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the articles used in its service."

27 According to the last instructions of David, the Levites were counted from those twenty years old or more.

28 The duty of the Levites was to help Aaron's descendants in the service of the temple of the Lord: to be in charge of the courtyards, the side rooms, the purification of all sacred things and the performance of other duties at the house of God.

29 They were in charge of the bread set out on the table, the flour for the grain offerings, the unleavened wafers, the baking and the mixing, and all measurements of quantity and size.

30 They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord. They were to do the same in the evening

31 and whenever burnt offerings were presented to the Lord on Sabbaths and at New Moon festivals and at appointed feasts. They were to serve before the Lord regularly in the proper number and in the way prescribed for them.

32 And so the Levites carried out their responsibilities for the Tent of Meeting, for the Holy Place and, under their brothers the descendants of Aaron, for the service of the temple of the Lord.

In these verses the ministry of the Levites is looked at in the light of some fundamental changes in the original task given to them when they were first conscripted for special service to the Lord, as Israel was on route from Egypt to the Promised Land. The place of worship at that time was the tabernacle, which was a tent that had to be put up and taken down every time Israel moved. The tabernacle's furniture had to be moved and the different articles were entrusted to specifically appointed Levite families. When Israel entered its "rest" by settling in Canaan, most of those tasks became obsolete.

David's sin of taking a census, had led to the revelation of the place where God wanted to be worshipped, which turned out to be Araunah's threshing floor. All of this called for a major reorganization of the Levites' ministries.

The temple had not been constructed yet and David would never see it. But David showed his faith by drawing up a task description for all the Levites for the time when there would be a temple in which God was worshipped on a daily basis.

There are some textual problems in this section about which *The Pulpit Commentary* comments: "This and the remaining verses of the chapter contain some general provisions regarding the offices and future work of the Levites — in part David's last edition of such provisions. (On the present verse compare ... Numbers 1:1-4; 4:1-3, 21-23, 29, 30; 8:23-26.) It is not easy to reconcile this verse with ver. 3. [One Bible scholar] cuts the knot at once by supposing the 'thirty' years of ver. 3 to be the error of a copyist, to whose memory the Mosaic census was present. And with [another scholar], he objects to the supposition that this verse describes a supplementary census, in conformity with 'David's last words' (ver. 27), and as contrasted with his former directions. With the exception of what is contained in vers. 25-27, it is true that these do not offer themselves sufficient indications to make one feel confident of this explanation. On the other hand, to set down the number 'thirty' in ver. 3 at once to the mistake of a copyist is too summary and convenient a way of escaping an awkward difficulty. It is evident that the following three verses do purport to explain why at this time the age of allowable service was altered to a standard so much lower than of old, and to assert that this alteration was recognized by the last orders of David."

The Matthew Henry's Commentary gives three reasons for the apparent changes David made in the original job description of the Levites. We read: "Here is, I. An alteration made in the computation of the effective men of the Levites—that whereas, in Moses' time, they were not enlisted, or taken into service, till they were thirty-years old, nor admitted as probationers till twenty-five (Num 8:24), David ordered, by direction from God, that they should be numbered for the service of the house of the Lord, from the age of twenty years and upwards, v. 24. This order he confirmed by his last words, v. 27. When

he put his last hand to the draught of this establishment he expressly appointed this to be done for ever after; yet not he; but the Lord.

1. Perhaps the young Levites, having no work appointed them till twenty-five years old, had many of them got a habit of idleness, or grew addicted to their pleasures, which proved both a blemish to their reputation and a hindrance to their usefulness afterwards, to prevent which inconvenience they are set to work, and brought under discipline, at twenty-years old. Those that will be eminent must learn to take care and take care betimes.

2. When the work of the Levites was to carry burdens, heavy burdens, the tabernacle and the furniture of it, God would not call any to it till they had come to their full strength; for he considers our frame, and, in service as well as sufferings, will lay no more upon us than we are able to bear. But now God had given rest to his people, and made Jerusalem his dwelling-place forever, so that there was no more occasion to carry the tabernacle and the vessels thereof, the service was much easier, and what would not over-work them nor over-load them if they entered upon it at twenty-years old.

3. Now the people of Israel were multiplied, and there was a more general resort to Jerusalem, and would be when the temple was built, than had ever been at Shiloh, or Nob, or Gibeon; it was therefore requisite there should be more hands employed in the temple-service, that every Israelite who brought an offering might find a Levite ready to assist him. When more work is to be done it is a pity but there should be more workmen fetched in for the doing of it. When the harvest is plenteous why should the laborers be few?"

Finally, *The Tyndale Commentary* observes: "Ostensibly, this section follows on from verses 2-6a, but harmonization of the two passages is hampered by two major difficulties. The Levites' age varies without explanation (cf. vv. 3, 24, 27), and the singing of God's praise is a task first given to one group (v. 5) and then to all Levites (v. 30). Explanations are possible in both cases, however. A difference between the minimum age of the Levites at a census and at actual employment has an earlier analogy in the Mosaic period (cf. Num. 4:34-48; 8:24). In both cases, the figures are probably best interpreted as a reduction in age in the light of the actual requirements, here from *thirty* (v. 3) to *twenty* (vv. 24, 27), since nowhere in the Old Testament is it envisaged that the age at which the Levites began their service was determined by other than practical considerations. Temple service will certainly have brought increased work, even though the occasional duty of transporting the ark was now to be abolished. In fact, the Levites and their duties had suffered from long-standing neglect, both before the time of David and at various points after the exile (cf. Ezra 2:40ff. = Neh. 7:43; Ezra 8:15-20; Neh. 13:10; Mal 3:3, 9-10). In each case, a recruitment drive would have been essential. Reference to the last instructions of David (v. 27) hints that the inclusion of younger Levites took place at the very end of David's reign, after the assembly of verses 1-6a.

As for the relationship between the Levites' musical activities in verses 2-6a and verses 28-31, it is often argued that the two passages are so incompatible that verses 25-32 must be either earlier ... or later ... than the Chronicler. It is possible, however, to be less drastic. Chronicles seems to draw a distinction between the Levites in general who led the nation in praise (e.g. 2 Chr. 8:14-15; 20:19; 30:22; 31:9) and the special group of Levites responsible for providing musical accompaniment (so v. 3; cf. ch. 25). In fact the Levites here who were *to thank and praise the LORD* (v. 30) probably represent those who administered the temple (cf. v. 4) rather than the Levites in their entirety. The detailed arrangements for the three smaller groups are dealt with in chapters 25 – 26, leaving this passage, together with 24:20-31, as the only ones referring to the activities of the largest group. For instance, the Levites' role as assistants to the priests occurs in both 23:28-31 and 24:20-31. Further, the various tasks involved in caring for the temple in verses 28-31 do not include the specific activities of the smaller groups, *viz.* acting as gatekeepers, officials and judges, and play musical instruments.

The practical and theological reasons which explain why David amended Moses' instructions about the Levites (vv. 25-27) are based on new circumstances in which the temple symbolized Israel's rest (v. 25; cf. Deut. 12:8-11) and God's fixed dwelling-place *in Jerusalem for ever* (v. 25). The association of 'rest' with David does not contradict 17:1, 10; 22:9, since the 'rest' is associated with the temple rather than David. In any case, these instructions belong to the *last instructions of David* (v. 27) when his fighting days were over. The temple would also render the Levites' transportation duties superfluous, though it would place fresh demands on their faith in God's provision and the extent of their commitment to God's service. Such obedient faith was no easier in the Chronicler's day than under Solomon, and the reality of foreign imperial sovereignty must have made many questions whether God was resident in Zion at all. But true religion is not dependent on the impermanence of current political systems, and Chronicles affirms that the first priority for God's people is to organize themselves for worship.

In the Levitical duties at the temple (vv. 28-32; cf. 9:28-32), two features stand out: their role as assistants to the Aaronite priests (vv. 28, 32), and the variety of their service: (a) a fabric committee (v. 28); (b) *purification* ('cleansing,' NRSV, RSV, NEB) of holy things (v. 28); (c) preparation of bread and flour, especially the 'Bread of the Presence' (REB, NEB) or 'showbread' (RSV, v. 29; cf. I Chr. 9:31-32; 28:16; 2 Chr. 2:4; Exod. 25:30; 35:13; Lev. 24:5-9; and (d) the offering of *praise* twice a day (vv. 30-31; cf. 2 Chr. 2:4; Ezra 3:3; Num. 28:1-8) and on special holy days (vv. 30-31; cf. 2 Chr. 2:4; 31:3; Lev. 23:1ff.; Num. 28 – 29). As assistants, they were active in side-rooms and courtyards rather than the main building, preparing food and offerings rather than actually offering sacrifices. The emphasis on assistance ties in with the important concept in Chronicles of 'help,' which can refer either to God's help for Israel (cf. 2 Chr. 18:31; 25:8), or to support Israel's royal (I Chr. 12:1ff.) and priestly (2 Chr. 8:14; 30:16-17) leaders. There is no sense here that the Levites are being suppressed or demoted, as commentators have often supposed – on the contrary, this was their duty (v. 28), and they played a vital role, second only to king and priests.

All this is summarized in verse 32, with the Levites' having a threefold 'responsibility' (GNB, cf. NIV; 'charge,' NRSV, RSV; Heb. *mišmeret*) towards the *Tent*, the *Holy Place* and the *priests* (the *Tent of Meeting* is probably that at Gibeon (I Chr. 16:39; 2 Chr. 1:3) rather than the one which temporarily housed the ark (I Chr. 16:1). 'Responsibility' is an important word for the Chronicler, who applies it almost entirely to the priest and Levites (also Num. and Ezek. 40 – 48). It has a double-sided connotation, sometimes as a charge received from God (cf. 2 Chr. 13:11; 23:6), and sometimes as a responsibility to or for other people or places (cf. I Chr. 9:27; 25:8; 2 Chr. 8:14; 35:2). The main point here is that the Levites actually *carried out* their responsibilities (v. 32), putting into practice their obedience to God, king, and priests. No more could have been asked of them."

v. Priests and Levitical assistants (24:1-31)

1 These were the divisions of the sons of Aaron: The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, and they had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar served as the priests.

3 With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelech a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of ministering.

4 A larger number of leaders were found among Eleazar's descendants than among Ithamar's, and they were divided accordingly: sixteen heads of families from Eleazar's descendants and eight heads of families from Ithamar's descendants.

- 5** They divided them impartially by drawing lots, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of God among the descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar.
- 6** The scribe Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a Levite, recorded their names in the presence of the king and of the officials: Zadok the priest, Ahimelech son of Abiathar and the heads of families of the priests and of the Levites — one family being taken from Eleazar and then one from Ithamar.
- 7** The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,
- 8** the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,
- 9** the fifth to Malkijah, the sixth to Mijamin,
- 10** the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,
- 11** the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah,
- 12** the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,
- 13** the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,
- 14** the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,
- 15** the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzез,
- 16** the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,
- 17** the twenty-first to Jakin, the twenty-second to Gamul,
- 18** the twenty-third to Delaiah and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.
- 19** This was their appointed order of ministering when they entered the temple of the Lord, according to the regulations prescribed for them by their forefather Aaron, as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded him.
- 20** As for the rest of the descendants of Levi: from the sons of Amram: Shubael; from the sons of Shubael: Jehdeiah.
- 21** As for Rehabiah, from his sons: Isshiah was the first.
- 22** From the Izharites: Shelomoth; from the sons of Shelomoth: Jahath.
- 23** The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third and Jekameam the fourth.
- 24** The son of Uzziel: Micah; from the sons of Micah: Shamir.
- 25** The brother of Micah: Isshiah; from the sons of Isshiah: Zechariah.
- 26** The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The son of Jaaziah: Beno.
- 27** The sons of Merari: from Jaaziah: Beno, Shoham, Zaccur and Ibri.
- 28** From Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons. **29** From Kish: the son of Kish: Jerahmeel.
- 30** And the sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder and Jerimoth. These were the Levites, according to their families.
- 31** They also cast lots, just as their brothers the descendants of Aaron did, in the presence of King David and of Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of families of the priests and of the Levites. The families of the oldest brother were treated the same as those of the youngest.

We are again facing the question what kind of spiritual blessing can be drawn from these kinds of lists. It seems that little or no food for the soul can be extracted.

Touching that subject, *The Tyndale Commentary* states: “Such mundane subject makes it difficult for the Christian reader to adopt anything other than an historical interpretation of this chapter. The problem is compounded by the fact that according to the New Testament, priesthood is not a separate leadership function within the church. Not that the New Testament abolishes priesthood altogether. On the contrary, the coming of Christ has brought about a decisive change from which every believer benefits. For example, every believer now enjoys direct access to Jesus, the supreme High Priest (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25). Even more radically, every believer becomes a priest (I Pet. 2:5,

9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10); offering sacrifices to God with their lips (Heb. 13:15) and with their bodies (Rom. 12:1).”

Commenting on that comment, we could say that, initially, in the Old Testament also, God, evidently, intended the whole nation of Israel to be a holy priesthood. God said to Moses: “‘Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”¹³⁵

We could deduct from this that the formation of a priesthood as a separate class in the nation was the indirect result of Israel lack of obedience and failure to keep God’s covenant. That is exemplified by the fact that, while Moses was on top of the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, the people made the gold calf and worshipped it as an idol.

So God chose Aaron to become the first high priest of the nation. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu perished when they brought a spice offering to the Lord, using “unauthorized fire.”¹³⁶ Since, in the chapter that records the incident, we find a prohibition for the priests to drink wine when offering sacrifices, we assume that Nadab and Abihu were drunk when they entered the sanctuary and, probably, penetrated in the Holy of Holies, which was the place where no priest, except the high priest was allowed to enter, and that only on the Day of Atonement.

Bible scholars do not agree on what constituted the sin of these priests, which led to their death. The essence seems to have been the fire they used for the burning of the sacrificed, which is called “unauthorized.” In the passage in Leviticus that records the sinful acts, the Hebrew words used are *‘esh zuwr* (strange fire). The second word is the problem one. *Zuwr* has the root meaning of “to turn aside,” referring to a stranger looking for lodging. But it can also mean “to be strange or profane” or “to commit adultery.”

The fire that burned on the altar had been lit by God. It had not been lit by human hands in the way people usually start fires. It was supernatural. Nadab and Abihu may have lit their own fire, thinking that they did not need the divine touch that would make a sacrifice acceptable. They demonstrated the same arrogance Cain had evinced when he brought a sacrifice that represented the fruit of his labor, instead of one that would have atoned for his sin.¹³⁷

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Verses 1-2 form an historical introduction clarifying the position of the descendants of *Eleazar* and *Ithamar* (for the tragic death of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, see Lev. 10:1-5). In MT, verse 1 begins with a note rather than a proper sentence (lit. ‘And to/for the Aaronites, divisions’), indicating that the chapter is appended to the wider arrangements for the Levites. Verses 3-6 explain how the division into courses was made, even though *Eleazar*’s descendants outnumbered *Ithamar*’s by two to one (v. 4).”

David must have felt that he could not create job descriptions for the people involved in the temple service without receiving input from those involved in it. So he consulted *Zadok* and *Ahimelech* who could trace their descent back Aaron; *Zadok* via *Eleazar* and *Ahimelech* via *Ithamar*.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on v. 3: “The Hebrew of this verse reads, *And David divided them, and Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices ‘pequddah,’ in their service ‘‘abodah.’* And the evident purport of it is that the three, David, *Zadok*, and *Ahimelech*, conjointly made the arrangements. This is virtually repeated in vers. 6, 31 (see also ...1 Chronicles 25:1 for an analogous case). For the ‘*Ahimelech*’ of this verse and vers. 6, 31, should be read

¹³⁵ Ex. 19:5, 6

¹³⁶ Lev. 10:1, 2

¹³⁷ Gen. 4:3-7

‘Abiathar,’ as shown in ... 1 Chronicles 18:16, by comparison of ... 1 Samuel 22:20; ... 2 Samuel 20:25; ... 1 Kings 1:7, 8; ... Mark 2:26.”

It is assumed that Zadok and Ahimelech served simultaneously as high priests. That was, of course a most unusual situation, which was not according to the law.

The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary states: “There were two high priests in the reign of David, apparently of nearly equal authority, Zadok and Abiathar (1 Chron 15:11; cf. 2 Sam 8:17; 15:24,35). It is not unlikely that after the death of Ahimelech and the secession of Abiathar to David, Saul may have made Zadok priest, and that David may have avoided the difficulty of deciding between the claims of his faithful friend Abiathar and his new and important ally Zadok by appointing them to a joint priesthood. The first place, with the ephod and Urim and Thummim, remained with Abiathar, who was in actual possession of them. It appears that Abiathar had special charge of the Ark and the services connected therewith, which agrees exactly with the possession of the ephod by Abiathar and his previous position with David before he became king. Abiathar, however, forfeited his place by taking part with Adonijah against Solomon, and Zadok was made high priest in his place.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Ahimelech’s presence alongside Zadok (v. 3) is unexpected, since Zadok was usually partnered by Abiathar (2 Sam. 15:35; 17:15; 1 Kgs 4:4; 1 Chr. 15:11). Ahimelech was probably the son of this same Abiathar (cf. 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chr. 18:16). Perhaps the mention of Ahimelech reflects a growing separation between David and Abiathar in the aftermath of Adonijah’s rebellion (1 Kgs 1:7ff).”

It may sound strange to us that the task division of the high priests would be decided by casting a lot. It would be the equivalent of our present-day “drawing straws.” The Old Testament Jews believed that throwing dice was a way to determine the will of God. We read in Proverbs: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”¹³⁸ And: “Casting the lot settles disputes and keeps strong opponents apart.”¹³⁹ When Israel conquered Canaan, the division of the land was decided by casting lots. We read that God said to Moses: “Be sure that the land is distributed by lot. What each group inherits will be according to the names for its ancestral tribe.”¹⁴⁰

The Hebrew word for “lot” is *gowral*, which refers to a rough stone or a pebble. Evidently, pebbles were used for casting lots.

The lot separated the Levites in twenty-three groups among which the task of serving in the temple was divided.

Shemaiah, a Levite, was David’s secretary. His name is quite common in the Old Testament, and there are scores in the Old Testament by that name. Shemaiah kept the record of the names of those chosen for the separate tasks and the priests Zadok and Ahimelech served as witnesses.

V. 5 reads in the NIV, “They divided them impartially by drawing lots.” The Hebrew word used is *chalaq*, which literally means “smooth.” It may refer to the smoothness of the pebbles that were used for the casting of lots. In most case the word is rendered in the Old Testament as “divide.” There may be a suggestion in the text that there was some jealousy among the Levite families and that David made this arrangement for the office of priests in order to keep competition out of the temple service.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The priests are divided into twenty-four courses. The nature of the list in verses 7-18 is explained in verse 19, that this is the priests’ *appointed order of ministering*. The *regulations prescribed by Aaron* have not been preserved, but were presumably contained in a kind of priests’ handbook. The names are not those of individuals but of families:

¹³⁸ Prov. 16:33

¹³⁹ Prov. 18:18

¹⁴⁰ Num. 26:55

Nehemiah 12:12-21 gives the actual leaders of the priestly families in c. 460 BC, for example. Similar lists of priestly families occur in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:36-39, 61-63 = Neh. 7:39-42, 63-65; Neh. 10:1-8; 11:10-14 [cf. 1 Chr. 9:10-13]; 22:1-7; 12:12-21), but none is identical with 1 Chronicles 24. In fact, although twelve of these names are scattered throughout the Ezra-Nehemiah lists, the remaining twelve have no parallel in the Bible. *Jedaiah* (v. 7), six times, and *Jehoiarib* (v. 7), four times, occur most frequently elsewhere. The Maccabees were descendants of Jehoiarib (cf. 1 Macc. 2:1), and John the Baptist of *Abijah* (v. 10; cf. Luke 1:5). The family of *Hakkoz* (v. 10) had difficulty in establishing their legitimate genealogy in the exile (Ezra 2:61-63 = Neh. 7:63-65), but their inclusion here signifies either their reinstatement or at least the validity of their claim. In later Jewish practice, the number of twenty-four courses was based on a lunar calendar of forty-eight weeks, with each course serving for a week at a time and thus twice a year.”

Vv. 20-31 give the list of the offspring of Levi’s son Amram. *Barnes’ Notes* comments: “The object of this second enumeration of the Levitical families (compare 1 Chron 23:7-23) seems to be the designation of the heads of the families in David’s time. The omission of the Gershonites is curious, and can only be accounted for by supposing that the author did not find any account of their heads in his authorities. The addition to the Merarites (1 Chron 24:26-27) is also curious. It brings the number of families up to twenty-five, which is one more than we should have expected.”

The Pulpit Commentary explains: “*The rest of the sons of Levi* designated here are explained sufficiently clearly by ver. 30. They were those who were not of the sons of Aaron, not priests, but whose ‘office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord’ (... 1 Chronicles 23:28), for certain specified work, some of which was of the more menial character. These, of course, do not exhaust the whole of the non-priestly Levites; for we read distinctly in the following two chapters of other detachments of the non-priestly Levites, whose office was as singers, doorkeepers, and treasure-keepers. And this consideration may of itself possibly be a sufficient account of the absence of any of the family of Gershonites in the list of the present chapter, though they do appear to view for other work in ... 1 Chronicles 26:21, etc. Amram ... Shubael. The latter of these two names marks the line of Moses, in his elder son, Gershon, whose son was Shebuel (... 1 Chronicles 23:15, 16), as the former is the name of the father of Moses, and *eldest* son of Kohath.”

The chapter ends with the information: “They also cast lots, just as their brothers the descendants of Aaron did, in the presence of King David and of Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of families of the priests and of the Levites. The families of the oldest brother were treated the same as those of the youngest.” The Hebrew text reads literally: “They likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Abimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, [even] the principle fathers over against their younger brethren.”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary remarks: “The meaning is not very clear: ‘both elder and younger,’ says [one Bible scholar], ‘had their places by lot, not by seniority of houses. They who were of greater dignity drew lots against those who were of less; and were to take their courses according to the lot they drew.’ This may have been the case; but we are very little interested in the subject.” One wonders if Clarke had forgotten Paul’s statement “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹⁴¹

The Pulpit Commentary comments about the words *over against... over against* in the Hebrew text: “This translation of the Hebrew *’ummaḥ* is obscure and awkward. The meaning is ‘equally with,’ or

¹⁴¹ II Tim. 3:16, 17

‘correspondingly with’ (... 1 Chronicles 26:12, 16, etc.). The root means ‘communion,’ and the word is found only in the constructive state.”

vi. Musicians (25:1-31)

1 David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service:

2 From the sons of Asaph:

Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah and Asarelah. The sons of Asaph were under the supervision of Asaph, who prophesied under the king's supervision.

3 As for Jeduthun, from his sons: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six in all, under the supervision of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the Lord.

4 As for Heman, from his sons: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael and Jerimoth; Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romamti-Ezer; Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir and Mahazioth.

5 All these were sons of Heman the king's seer. They were given him through the promises of God to exalt him. God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

6 All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the Lord, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king.

7 Along with their relatives — all of them trained and skilled in music for the Lord—they numbered 288.

8 Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties.

9 The first lot, which was for Asaph, fell to Joseph, his sons and relatives, 12 the second to Gedaliah, he and his relatives and sons, 12

10 the third to Zaccur, his sons and relatives, 12

11 the fourth to Izri, his sons and relatives, 12

12 the fifth to Nethaniah, his sons and relatives, 12

13 the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and relatives, 12

14 the seventh to Jesarelah, his sons and relatives, 12

15 the eighth to Jeshaiiah, his sons and relatives, 12

16 the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons and relatives, 12

17 the tenth to Shimei, his sons and relatives, 12

18 the eleventh to Azarel, his sons and relatives, 12

19 the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and relatives, 12

20 the thirteenth to Shubael, his sons and relatives, 12

21 the fourteenth to Mattithiah, his sons and relatives, 12

22 the fifteenth to Jerimoth, his sons and relatives, 12

23 the sixteenth to Hananiah, his sons and relatives, 12

24 the seventeenth to Joshbekashah, his sons and relatives, 12

25 the eighteenth to Hanani, his sons and relatives, 12

26 the nineteenth to Mallothi, his sons and relatives, 12

27 the twentieth to Eliathah, his sons and relatives, 12

28 the twenty-first to Hothir, his sons and relatives, 12

29 the twenty-second to Giddalti, his sons and relatives, 12

30 the twenty-third to Mahazioth, his sons and relatives, 12
31 the twenty-fourth to Romamti-Ezer, his sons and relatives, 12

We observe again that lists like these provide little spiritual blessing to the modern Bible reader. They were primarily meant to provide encouragement and information to the Jews who returned to the Promised Land from their Babylonian exile. To them it was important to trace their roots. They also needed this background information in their efforts to rebuild the temple that had been leveled by the Babylonians at the conquest of Jerusalem.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “The arrangements for the *musicians*, the first of the specialist groups of Levites, are now given. Music was of the highest importance in Israelite worship, as is clear from many parts of the Old Testament, notably the Psalms. The Levitical musicians’ role in leading and directing worship was crucial, for it was they who encouraged the people to worship God with conviction, harmony, and vitality. David’s organization prepared for the Levites’ leading of worship in Solomon’s temple, as illustrated by the temple dedication service when the great Levitical orchestra and choir made their declaration: ‘He is good; his love endures for ever’ (2 Chr. 5:12-14; 7:1-6; cf. 1 Chr. 15 – 16).

These musicians were divided into twenty-four courses, on the analogy of the priests. The division took place in two stages, again like the priests (cf. ch. 24). First they were separated into their three main families (vv. 1-6), and then into their courses by the casting of lots (vv. 7-31).”

One of the most amazing features of this list is that it was the fruit of David’s personal involvement. He was not allowed to build the temple, but his creative mind envisioned what would be needed to make the temple a place of worship for God. As is indicated in some of the psalms he had composed himself, he knew that “God is good and his love endures forever.”

The Hebrew words *la`olaam chadow*, “forever his mercy,” run like a scarlet thread through the psalms. They are, for example, like a drumbeat that sets the rhythm for psalm 136.

The NIV reads that “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals.” This gives the impression that the military were involved in setting up this schedule. The Hebrew text reads literally: “Moreover, David and the captains of the host separated to the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun.” The Hebrew word for “host” is *tsaba*, which literally means “a mass of people.” It may refer to army duties or to any other kind of service. We find the same word in the verse: “Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come *to serve* in the work at the Tent of Meeting.”¹⁴²

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “The musicians are divided into three family groups. David supervised the separation of the musicians, aided probably by the ‘leaders of the Levites’ (v. 1, GNB) rather than *the commanders of the army*. The latter would be rather out of place here, while the Levites’ leaders have already been involved (23:2), and the priests’ leaders assisted in setting up the priestly courses (24:3, 6).

The musicians’ task is unexpectedly described as *prophesying* (v. 1, cf. vv. 2-3). The context indicates that this activity involved the playing of musical instruments, and that it was carried out under the king’s supervision (vv. 2, 6). Both features are unusual in Israelite prophecy. Two explanations of this Levitical prophecy are possible. Either they supplied messages direct from God in the manner of the classical prophets, for which the Levite Jahaziel (2 Chr. 20:14-17) provides an obvious analogy (cf. GNB, ‘to proclaim God’s messages’), or their praise was itself seen as ‘prophecy’ in that it proclaimed

¹⁴² Num. 4:23

God's word with God's authority. Further examples of the latter are found in several of the prophetic books. In addition to the familiar 'words' from God, they include messages addressed to God, hymns and prayers of the kind that the Levites would have used in their own worship (e.g. Isa. 12; 42:10-13; Jer. 10:6-10)."

Actually, prophecy in the Old Testament refers to more than foretelling the future. The Hebrew word *naba*' can mean "to speak or sing by inspiration." That Asaph was divinely inspired is proven by the fact that he composed several hymns that are included in the Book of Psalms. At least twelve Psalms are ascribed to Asaph.¹⁴³ *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* states: "Which prophesied - i.e., in this connection, played with instruments. This metaphorical application of the term 'prophesy' most probably originated in the practice of the prophets, who endeavored to rouse their prophetic spirit by the animating influence of music It is said that Asaph did this 'according to David's order,' because by royal appointment he officiated in the tabernacle on Zion (1 Chron 16:37-41), while other leaders of the sacred music were stationed at Gibeon."

The Pulpit Commentary states: "When it is said 'for Asaph,' the meaning is for those 'under his hand,' or direction, and who as a band bore his name, and performed among other odes those which he *prophesied*. *Zaccur*. A descendant after the Return is mentioned in ... Nehemiah 12:35. *Asarelah*. This last of the four sons of Asaph is called in ver. 14, Jesharelah. *Under the hands of... according to the order of*. The Hebrew words are 'to the hand of' and 'to the hands of.' Between the signification of these two forms, the one expressed in the singular number and the other in the plural, there does not seem to be any distinction, and accordingly they might be better translated, *under the direction of... under the directions of*. The latter form is that found in vers. 3, 6."

The Tyndale Commentary states: "Of the three musical families (vv. 2-6), Asaph has four sons (v. 2), Jeduthun six (v. 3, 'Shimei' must be added to MT, as in v. 17), and Heman fourteen (vv. 4-6), making a total of twenty-four. The sons were under the direct supervision of their *father* (vv. 3, 6), who was in turn responsible to the *king* (vv. 2, 5-6). The term *seer* (v. 5) is a synonym for 'prophet' in the Old Testament, and so should be understood in the same way as the references to prophesying (vv. 1-3). Both Asaph (2 Chr. 29:3) and Jeduthun (2 Chr. 35:15) also received this title. No further details are known of the *promises of God* (v. 5; cf. NRSV, RSV, NEB) to Heman, who appears outside the Chronicles only in a Psalm title (88:1) and possibly 1 Kings 4:31. His 'exaltation' (v. 5, cf. NRSV, RSV, NIV) is probably indicated by the number of his children (cf. Ps. 127:3-5).

The names of the last nine of Heman's sons (from *Hananiah*, v. 4) are often thought to be a thinly veiled fragment of a poem. Some names are certainly unusual, especially those based on first-person verbal forms (e.g. *Giddalti*, *Mallothi*.)"

One of the most amazing features of the arrangement of the worship service involving three whole families is that all the members of each family must have had musical gifts. A later example of a similar situation would be the composer Johan Sebastian Bach, whose eight sons became well-known composers.

It is said about all these musicians that they prophesied. The verb "to prophesy" is usually interpreted as speaking under divine inspiration. Peter writes about prophecy: "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁴ And Paul states about prophesying: "Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening,

¹⁴³ Ps. 50, 73-83

¹⁴⁴ II Peter 1:21

encouragement and comfort.”¹⁴⁵ That sounds more like a definition of preaching. That does not mean that preachers ought not to be divinely inspired.

There is a strange expression in the Hebrew text of v. 5. It reads literally: “And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters to lift up the horn.” The NIV renders this with: “They were given to him through the promises of God to exalt him.” A footnote gives the original meaning of the expression. “Lift up the horn” may be an idiom for “to praise.” As such we find it in “He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.”¹⁴⁶ The same idiom is also found in the New Testament. After the birth of John the Baptist, we read that his father Zacharias sang: “He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”¹⁴⁷ A footnote in the NIV reads: “Horn here symbolizes strength.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the remainder of this chapter: “Like their superiors the priests, the musicians were divided into twenty-four courses. Presumably, each course accompanied one of the priestly courses on a regular basis at morning and evening worship. The total is given as 288 (v. 7). This appears to contradict the ‘4.000’ of 23:5, though understanding the latter as forty (family) groups at least makes the figures somewhat more compatible. Drawing *lots* is again the method used (vv. 7-8), without privilege for age or experience (cf. 24:5, 31; 26:13). The names (vv. 9-31) in fact follow a fairly regular pattern, with Jeduthun alternating first with Asaph and then with Heman (vv. 9-21), and the last ten names all coming from the Hemanites (vv. 22-31). This is not totally artificial, as has been alleged. The pattern is not completely uniform, and implies a kind of ‘seeding’ system not dissimilar to that used for the priests (24:5). In verse 9, *Asaph* may not have been originally included (so REB, NEB), and the phrase ‘he, his sons and brothers, twelve’ (cf. REB, NEB, NIV; but not NRSV, RSV, JB) may have been added subsequently to the clause about Joseph, but the textual support for these changes is not uniform.”

vii. Gatekeepers (26:1-19)

1 The divisions of the gatekeepers: From the Korahites: Meshelemiah son of Kore, one of the sons of Asaph.

2 Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,

3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth and Eliehoenai the seventh.

4 Obed-Edom also had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sacar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth,

5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh and Peullethai the eighth. (For God had blessed Obed-Edom.)

6 His son Shemaiah also had sons, who were leaders in their father's family because they were very capable men.

7 The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed and Elzabad; his relatives Elihu and Semakiah were also able men.

8 All these were descendants of Obed-Edom; they and their sons and their relatives were capable men with the strength to do the work — descendants of Obed-Edom, 62 in all.

9 Meshelemiah had sons and relatives, who were able men-18 in all.

¹⁴⁵ I Cor. 14:3

¹⁴⁶ Ps. 148:14

¹⁴⁷ Luke 1:69

10 Hosah the Merarite had sons: Shimri the first (although he was not the firstborn, his father had appointed him the first),

11 Hilkihah the second, Tabaliah the third and Zechariah the fourth. The sons and relatives of Hosah were 13 in all.

12 These divisions of the gatekeepers, through their chief men, had duties for ministering in the temple of the Lord, just as their relatives had.

13 Lots were cast for each gate, according to their families, young and old alike.

14 The lot for the East Gate fell to Shelemiah. Then lots were cast for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and the lot for the North Gate fell to him.

15 The lot for the South Gate fell to Obed-Edom, and the lot for the storehouse fell to his sons.

16 The lots for the West Gate and the Shalleketh Gate on the upper road fell to Shuppim and Hosah. Guard was alongside of guard:

17 There were six Levites a day on the east, four a day on the north, four a day on the south and two at a time at the storehouse.

18 As for the court to the west, there were four at the road and two at the court itself.

19 These were the divisions of the gatekeepers who were descendants of Korah and Merari.

Verses 1-11 give a list of names of “gatekeepers;” verses 12-19 list the tasks ascribed to those men.

The Hebrew word for “gatekeeper” is *shower*, which the KJV consistently translates as “porter.” That word has acquired a different meaning in modern English, but it used to refer to someone who worked at “port” or city gate.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary explains: “There were four classes of these, each of which belonged to one of the four gates of the temple, which opened to the four cardinal points of heaven. The eastern gate fell to Shelemiah; the northern, to Zechariah, 1 Chron 26:14; the southern, to Obed-edom, 1 Chron 26:15; the western, to Shuppim and Hosah, 1 Chron 26:16. These several persons were captains of these porter-bands or door-keepers at the different gates. There were probably a thousand men under each of these captains; as we find, from 1 Chron 23:5, that there were four thousand in all.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “Chapter 26 introduces groups of Levites who have apparently ordinary tasks. They include primarily the *gatekeepers* (vv. 1-19) and *treasurers* (vv. 20-28), but also judges and various civil servants who worked *away from the temple* (vv. 29-32). They represent the final two groups of the four mentioned in 23:3-6a. The ‘gatekeepers’ of 23:5 incorporate the treasurers here (vv. 1-28), while the various officials in verses 30-32 are associated with the ‘officials and judges’ (v. 29; 23:4).

A very important point is made by the inclusion of these groups, even though they might seem to represent a diversion from Chronicles’ main theme. As God’s people pay proper attention to their status as a worshipping community, the distinction between the sacred and the secular disappears. All tasks, whether mundane or specialized, ‘religious’ or ‘lay,’ have value in the eyes of God. Every Levite was as much involved in the ‘service of the temple of the LORD’ as the priests and their immediate assistants (cf. 23:24, 32). The gatekeepers were ‘to serve in the house of the LORD side by side with their kinsmen’ (v. 12, REB, NEB), and even the Levitical officials in Transjordan were occupied with ‘the business of God and of the king’ (v. 32, JB).”

Tyndale’s remark about the fading away of the distinction between “mundane or specialized” makes me think of Oswald Chambers’ pertinent observation: “Some saints cannot do menial work and remain saints because it is beneath their dignity.” And: “It takes Almighty God Incarnate in you to peel potatoes properly, and to wash heathen children for the glory of God. Anyone cannot do these things;

anybody can do the shining in the sun and the sporting in the footlights, but it takes God's Incarnated Spirit to make you so absolutely humanly His that you are utterly unnoticeable."

The Tyndale Commentary further comments: "The arrangements described here were a preparation for Solomon's temple, and they were specifically confirmed by Solomon (2 Chr. 8:14-15). Though less prominent than some of their Levitical colleagues, from time to time the gatekeepers made a vital contribution to national life, notably under the high priest Jehoiada (2 Chr. 23:4-6, 19), and in the reigns of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 31:14-19) and Josiah (2 Chr. 34:9-13). The gatekeepers were especially important to the Chronicler (cf. 1 Chr. 9:17-27). Comparatively large numbers of gatekeepers returned from exile (Ezra 2:42 = Neh. 7:45) and eventually resettled in Jerusalem (Neh. 11:19; cf. 7:1). The detailed treatment in 1 Chronicles 9:17-27, which may well describe developments in or near the Chronicler's own time, suggests that the Chronicler saw in them an example by which others might be encouraged. The treasurers in particular were likely to have been grateful for the Chronicler's support. Apart from a temporary improvement stimulated by Nehemiah's direct involvement (Neh. 12:44-47), there was a regular shortfall in contributions for the tithes (Neh. 10:32-39; 13:10-13; Mal. 3:6-12)."

We must remember that these lists are not a record of the actual division of labor for the Levites at the time the temple was built and started functioning. They were the product of David's creative mind. That is, in fact, an amazing feat. David did some eschatological thinking and planning. That made Solomon's temple also David's temple.

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "This chapter is occupied in its first nineteen verses with an enumeration of the porters and then of their arrangement. The porters were those who were to have charge of the entrances of the sanctuary. For at present, all was in plan only, thus set out by David beforehand.

V. 1— The subject of the porters has been before us in ... 1 Chronicles 9:17-27; 15:23, 24; 16:38; 23:5, in which last passage we are told that there were four thousand of the Levites who were porters. The divisions of the porters spoken of in the present chapter were from the sons of Korah or Kore, and Merari (vers. 10, 19). The Korahite porters are given us in the first nine verses. The first mentioned is *Meshelemiah*, who, though called the same in vers. 2, 9, appears as Shelemiah in ver. 14, and in ... 1 Chronicles 9:19 as Shallum. *Asaph*, given here as one of the ancestors, must be replaced by Ebiasaph (... 1 Chronicles 6:23, 37; 9:19; also ... Exodus 6:24), who was a Korahite, whereas Asaph was a Gershonite (... 1 Chronicles 6:39, 43)."

Some interesting features in this list are casual observations the Chronicler makes about people in his list. In v. 5, for instance, we read "For God had blessed Obed-Edom." That blessing was given to him and his family when the ark was kept at his house.¹⁴⁸

That blessing appears to be confirmed in the character of the sons that were born to Obed-Edom. In the Hebrew text they are called "mighty men of valor." The Hebrew word used is *gibbor*, which is the word used to describe the unusual features of the "Nephilim" in the pre-flood world. We read there: "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the *heroes of old*, men of renown."¹⁴⁹

The Adam Clarke's Commentary comments: "They were not only porters or door-keepers in the ordinary sense of the word, but they were a military guard for the gates: and perhaps in this sense alone we are to understand their office."

The sons of Shemaiah are characterized as "able men." The Hebrew word that describes them is *chayil*, which can be rendered "wealthy." As such it appears in the verse that describes the loot Simeon

¹⁴⁸ 1 Chr. 13:13-14

¹⁴⁹ Gen. 6:4

and Levi took from Hamor and Shechem, after they killed them because Shechem had raped their sister Dinah. We read: “They carried off all their *wealth* and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.”¹⁵⁰

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the task description of the Levites: “*The gatekeepers* (‘*temple guards*,’ GNB; ‘*porters*,’ AV) had no common task. Essentially their duty was to make ordinary people aware of the practical limits of holiness, for anyone entering the sanctuary unlawfully did so on penalty of death (cf. Num. 3:10). They had special responsibility for the temple doors, as a safeguard against idolatrous practices (cf. Mal. 1:10; 2 Chr. 28:24; 29:3, 7), and also to ensure the temple’s security (cf. 1 Sam. 3:15). The job, however, could also bring a special sense of privilege. As one of the psalmists put it, ‘I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked’ (Ps. 84:10).”

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments on the qualifications of the sons of Shemaiah: “The circumstance of physical strength is prominently noticed in this chapter, as the office of the porters required them not only to act as sentinels of the sacred edifice and its precious furniture, against attacks of plunderers, or popular insurrection-to be, in fact, a military guard-but, after the temple was built, to open and shut the gates, which were extraordinarily large and ponderous.”

The Tyndale Commentary furthermore comments on the words “able men”: “*Able men* (v. 7, NIV, NRSV, RSV; ‘men of ability,’ REB, NEB; cf. v. 6, 8, 9, 30, 31, 32) might be better translated, ‘strong men’ (cf. JB). The job might entail removal of unwelcome people or objects (cf. 2 Chr. 26:16-20), and would have required some physical strength. *Shimri*’s promotion (v. 10) has a parallel in Chronicles in the contrasting demotion of Reuben (5:1-2; cf. also 2:3). Such changes of fortune were of obvious interest in genealogical lists, but the circumstances surrounding loss of primogeniture rights were normally tightly controlled. Only serious rebelliousness against one’s parents led to these drastic consequences (cf. Gen. 35:22; 29:3-4). The total number of gatekeepers was ninety-three (62+18+13), considerably fewer than the ‘4,000’ of 23:5, but as with the musicians, the larger number might be reduced considerably by being explained as forty clans.”

The Pulpit Commentary states about the phrase “able men for strength for the service”: “The Hebrew gives this in the singular, *la’bodaaah*, etc. The apparent intention is to *distribute* equally to each and every one of *all of the sons of Obed-edom*, the high character for strength given to them as grouped here together.”

Once again we must remind ourselves that the arrangements reported in this chapter were not made after the construction of the temple, but at the time David was making the blueprint. At that time, we read: “Lots were cast for each gate, according to their families, young and old alike.”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments: “None of these captains or their companies were permitted to choose which gate they would guard, but each took his appointment by lot.”

The division of the job of guarding the gates went from the east gate to the west gate via north and south, which is counter-clockwise. No explanation for this is given.

The Tyndale Commentary states: “*Lots* were cast for their duties (v. 13), this time on the basis of family group rather than individual families as before (cf. 24:5, 31; 25:8). The descendants of *Meshelemiah* (= *Shelemiah*, v. 14) and *Obed-Edom* were both divided in two, through separate lines from their eldest sons *Zachariah* (v. 14; cf. 9:12) and *Shemaiah* (vv. 6-7, 15). The total number of positions was twenty-four, but they were not distributed equally between the twenty-four families of verses 1-12, nor do they correspond to the twenty-four courses of priests and Levites.

¹⁵⁰ Gen. 34:25

Guarding the *East Gate* (v. 14) seems to have been the position of greatest responsibility. This would have led directly to the temple entrance, but it also reflects the fact that in post-exile times it was known as the ‘King’s Gate’ (cf. 1 Chr. 9:18; Dan. 2:49). *Zechariah*’s role as a *wise counselor* may also indicate an official position as a royal advisor (cf. 1 Chr. 27:32-33; 2 Chr. 22:3, 4; 25:16). The need for a separate guard at the *South Gate* (v. 15) is often alleged to reflect the plan of the Second Temple rather than Solomon’s. In Solomon’s temple, it is argued, the south entrance was attached directly to the royal palace, making the need for a guard unnecessary (Ezek. 43:8). But Ezekiel 43:7-8 is concerned with idolatry in the temple precincts, and the structure next to the south gate is just as likely to have been a ‘high place’ or even a royal cemetery as part of the palace. In any case, it was Ezekiel’s firm conviction that the need to preserve the temple’s holiness was not in any way lessened because of the proximity of royal buildings.”

We must observe here that “Ezekiel’s temple” was not an actual building, but a prophetic blueprint that served as an object lesson to make the people in exile ashamed of their sin. After having described the temple plan, God tells Ezekiel: “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple — its arrangement, its exits and entrances — its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations.”¹⁵¹

The Tyndale Commentary continues: “Neither the Shalleketh Gate nor Shuppim (v. 6) are known elsewhere, and the latter may be the result of a copyist’s error. ‘Colonnade’ (v. 18, REB, NEB, NRSV) is the most likely meaning of ‘parbar’ (RSV, JB, *court*, NIV; ‘pavilion,’ GNB). The Qumran community understood it to be an area of freestanding pillars to the west of the temple, behind the Holy of Holies, and therefore perhaps comparable to the structure mentioned here which was also on the *west*.”

ix. Treasurers (26:20-28)

20 Their fellow Levites were in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries for the dedicated things.

21 The descendants of Ladan, who were Gershonites through Ladan and who were heads of families belonging to Ladan the Gershonite, were Jehieli,

22 the sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his brother Joel. They were in charge of the treasuries of the temple of the Lord.

23 From the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites and the Uzzielites:

24 Shubael, a descendant of Gershom son of Moses, was the officer in charge of the treasuries.

25 His relatives through Eliezer: Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiiah his son, Joram his son, Zicri his son and Shelomith his son.

26 Shelomith and his relatives were in charge of all the treasuries for the things dedicated by King David, by the heads of families who were the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and by the other army commanders.

27 Some of the plunder taken in battle they dedicated for the repair of the temple of the Lord.

28 And everything dedicated by Samuel the seer and by Saul son of Kish, Abner son of Ner and Joab son of Zeruiah, and all the other dedicated things were in the care of Shelomith and his relatives.

¹⁵¹ Ezek. 43:10, 11

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the treasurers: “These were associated with the gatekeepers because the temple *treasuries* or *storehouses* (vv. 15, 17) were situated near the gates (cf. 9:26; Neh. 12:25). Two separate treasuries are mentioned: the general account (*the treasuries of the house of God*, v. 20, cf. v. 22) which was supervised by the *Gershonites* (vv. 21-22), and a special account for *the treasuries for the dedicated things* (v. 20, cf. v. 26) under the control of *Shelomith*, an *Amramite* (vv. 23-28; cf. 28:12).

The ‘dedicated things’ were spoils of war (v. 27), provided by David (v. 26; cf. 1 Chr. 18:11; 2 Chr. 5:1), and other leaders (v. 28). The events to which v. 28 refers are not otherwise mentioned, except perhaps in the case of Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 15:21). A statement that these gifts were for the temple’s *repair* (v. 27; cf. NRSV, RSV, ‘maintenance,’ REB, NEB, ‘upkeep’) is unexpected, since it had not yet been built. Either this is a hint of a later date for the paragraph, or the word must be understood in the sense of ‘strengthening.’

The family names in the whole of verses 20-32 are based on the list of Kohathites in 23:16-20. Several details confirm 23:6b-23 as old traditional names of the Levitical groups. *Shubael* (v. 24, NIV, REB, NEB) or ‘Shebuel’ (GNB, NRSV, RSV, JB) appears in both lists, for example (cf. 23:16), but there is a minimum of six generations between him and his descendant *Shelomith* (vv. 25, 26, 28, NIV, GNB) / ‘Shelomoth’ (REB, NEB, NRSV, RSV, JB) who was contemporary with David (vv. 24-25). *Jeriah* also appears in verses 31-32 and 23:19, but since he is credited with 2,700 relatives by the end of David’s reign, he too must belong to an earlier generation. There is a problem with ‘Ahijah’ (v. 20, NRSV, RSV), whose name appears nowhere else in chapters 23 – 27, even though he appears to be the chief treasurer. His name is usually correctly read as ‘their brothers’ (cf. NIV, etc.) on the basis of the LXX. It is also unclear whether *Zetham* and *Joel* were the sons (vv. 21-22) or brothers (23:8) or *Jehieli*. The most striking feature is that the Kohathites (v. 23; cf. 23:12-20) were active throughout Israel.”

ix. Levite officials throughout the land (26:29-32)

29 From the Izharites: Kenaniah and his sons were assigned duties away from the temple, as officials and judges over Israel.

30 From the Hebronites: Hashabiah and his relatives — seventeen hundred able men — were responsible in Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the Lord and for the king's service.

31 As for the Hebronites, Jeriah was their chief according to the genealogical records of their families. In the fortieth year of David's reign a search was made in the records, and capable men among the Hebronites were found at Jazer in Gilead.

32 Jeriah had twenty-seven hundred relatives, who were able men and heads of families, and King David put them in charge of the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh for every matter pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.

The NIV’s “duties away from the temple” is the rendering of the Hebrew words *chiytsown mela'kah*, “duties away.”

The Pulpit Commentary states: “For the *officers and judges*, see ... 1 Chronicles 23:4; ... 2 Chronicles 19:5-11. The too generic term ‘officers’ (... Exodus 5:6-19: ... Numbers 11:16, etc.) may be advantageously superseded by the word ‘scribes.’ These scribes and judges, it appears, were taken from the families of Izhar and Hebron alone, without any Amramite or Uzzielite of the other Kohathites, and without any Gershonite or Merarite of the other Levites.”

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “While the *Amramites* were temple treasurers (vv. 23-28), the *Izharites* (v. 29) and the *Hebronites* (vv. 30-32) had ‘outside duties’ (v. 29, NRSV, RSV). Only for

the *Uzzielites* (v. 23) are no details given. The *officials and judges* (v. 29) correspond to the fourth group of Levites in 23:4 (cf. also 2 Chr. 19:8-11). Other officials were active to the *west of the Jordan* (vv. 30-31a) and in Transjordan (vv. 31b-32). Although they were still regarded as doing the *work of the LORD* (v. 30, cf. v.32), they were also royal officials in the *king's service* (v. 30, cf. v. 32). This was a new development, but it is unclear whether or not it began in David's reign and why the number of officials east of the Jordan comfortably outnumbered those to the west (vv. 30, 32). Is there a hint here that these Levites were part of Solomon's army of officials (cf. 1 Kgs 4:7-19; 9:23), and their demands became one of the reasons for Solomon's unpopularity in the north? At no other point during the monarchy would so many administrators under Jerusalem's control have been active in Transjordan."

No explanation is given as to what would be involved in "all the work of the Lord" which was the responsibility of the Levites west of the Jordan. *Barnes' Notes* suggests: "The 'business of the Lord' in the provinces would consist especially in the collection of the tithes, the redemption-money, and the free-will offerings of the people. It may perhaps have included some religious teaching. Compare 2 Chron 17:7-9."

x. Other leaders prepare for the temple (23:1-34)

a. The divisions of the army (27:1-15)

1 This is the list of the Israelites — heads of families, commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and their officers, who served the king in all that concerned the army divisions that were on duty month by month throughout the year. Each division consisted of 24,000 men.

2 In charge of the first division, for the first month, was Jashobeam son of Zabdiel. There were 24,000 men in his division.

3 He was a descendant of Perez and chief of all the army officers for the first month.

4 In charge of the division for the second month was Dodai the Ahohite; Mikloth was the leader of his division. There were 24,000 men in his division.

5 The third army commander, for the third month, was Benaiah son of Jehoiada the priest. He was chief and there were 24,000 men in his division.

6 This was the Benaiah who was a mighty man among the Thirty and was over the Thirty. His son Ammizabad was in charge of his division.

7 The fourth, for the fourth month, was Asahel the brother of Joab; his son Zebadiah was his successor. There were 24,000 men in his division.

8 The fifth, for the fifth month, was the commander Shamhuth the Izrahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

9 The sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

10 The seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, an Ephraimite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

11 The eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, a Zerahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

12 The ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer the Anathothite, a Benjamite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

13 The tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai the Netophathite, a Zerahite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

14 The eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah the Pirathonite, an Ephraimite. There were 24,000 men in his division.

15 The twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, from the family of Othniel. There were 24,000 men in his division.

In introducing this section, *The Tyndale Commentary* writes: “To the modern reader, this chapter seems the most unpromising of all the Chronicler’s lists and genealogies. The contents are secular rather than religious, the temple is not mentioned (in contrast with chs. 23 – 26), and even God makes only a single passing appearance (v. 23). The picture of order and unity is often thought to be overneat, probably deriving from a later reviser whose view of David owed more to sympathetic admiration than critical objectivity.

Pessimism of this kind, however, is unjustified. Both the chapter’s arrangement and the editorial comment in verses 23-24 strongly suggest that it is part of the Chronicler’s purposes. Although the temple is not mentioned directly, the chapter is in fact just as much concerned with temple preparations as the rest of chapters 23 – 27, except that the focus has now widened from the Levitical temple personnel to ‘all Israel,’ a favorite theme of Chronicles.”

This list gives a breakdown of the organization of David’s army and the way the men of Israel, who were in the required age bracket, were conscripted for military service.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments: “This enumeration is widely different from the preceding. In that, we have the orders and courses of the priests and the Levites in their ecclesiastical ministrations; in this, we have the account of the order of the civil service, that which related simply to the political state of the king and the kingdom. Twenty-four persons, chosen out of David’s worthies, each of whom had a second, were placed over twenty-four thousand men, who all served a month in turn at a time; and this was the whole of their service during the year, after which they attended to their own affairs. Thus the king had always on foot a regular force of twenty-four thousand, who served without expense to him or the state, and were not oppressed by the service, which took up only a twelfth part of their time; and by this plan he could at any time, when the exigency of the state required it, bring into the field twelve times twenty-four thousand, or two hundred and eighty-eight thousand fighting men, independently of the twelve thousand officers, which made in the whole an effective force of three hundred thousand soldiers; and all these men were prepared, disciplined, and ready at a call without the smallest expense to the state or the king. These were, properly speaking, the militia of the Israelitish kingdom.”

The Pulpit Commentary makes this interesting observation: “It is impossible to feel fully satisfied with any translation which the words of this verse offer. Yet there can scarcely be any doubt of the meaning of the verse, viz. that the writer would speak of *the children of Israel, including the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, as regards their courses and their number in their courses, as they succeeded one another, month by month, including also all those officers who served the king in any relation to these courses — the courses were twelve, and each course was numbered twenty-four thousand.* Meantime, when we turn to the list, we do not find any full complement of *chiefs, captains, and officers* specified, but apparently only the *chief* of each course, with somewhat ambiguous additions in vers. 4 (Mikloth), 6 (Ammizabad), 7 (Zebadiah); while what seems an unnecessary stress repeats the *number* each time. This, however, in fact, tallies with the clause ‘respecting their number’ in the first verse, and may constitute the explanation of the apparent inconsistency in question. [One Bible scholar] ... says on this military portion of David’s preparations, that he ‘organized an immense disposable force; every month twenty-four thousand men, furnished in rotation by the tribes, appeared in arms, and were trained as the standing militia of the country. At the head of his army were officers of

consummate experience and, what was more highly esteemed in the warfare of the time, extraordinary personal activity, strength, and valor. His heroes remind us of those of Arthur or Charlemagne, excepting that the *armor* of the feudal chieftains constituted their superiority; here, main strength of body and dauntless fortitude of mind.’ *Which came in and went out month by month; i.e. exchanged places in rotation (... 2 Kings 11:5-7, 9; 2 Chronicles 23:8).*”

David’s organization of the Israelite army imposed little hardship upon the population. *The Easton’s Bible Dictionary* states about the male population in David’s days: “At the Exodus the number of males above twenty years capable of bearing arms was 600,000 (Ex 12:37). In David’s time it mounted to the number of 1,300,000 (2 Sam 24:9).” Of those 288,000 were conscripted and employed for only one month of the year. This gave the king the disposition over 24,000 fighting men every month, with an option of calling up the whole number in case of an emergency.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states about Israel’s armed forces during David’s reign: “From the story of Nabal (1 Sam 25) we learn how a band like that of David could be maintained in service, and we gather that landholders who benefited by the presence of an armed force were expected to provide the necessary supplies. On David’s accession to the throne this band of warriors remained attached to his person and became the backbone of his army. We can identify them with the gibborim - the mighty men of whom Benaiah at a later time became captain (2 Sam 23:22-23; 1 Kings 1:8) and who are also known by the name of Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Sam 8:18). These may have received their name from their foreign origin, the former, in Hebrew kerethi being originally from Crete but akin to the Philistines; and the latter, in Hebrew pelethi being Philistines by birth. That there were foreign soldiers in David’s service we know from the examples of Uriah the Hittite and Ittai of Gath. David’s gibborim have been compared to the Praetorian Cohort of the Roman emperors, the Janissaries of the sultans, and the Swiss Guards of the French kings. Of David’s army Joab was the commander-in-chief, and to the military’ genius of this rough and unscrupulous warrior, the king’s near kinsman, the dynasty of David was deeply indebted.”

b. The officers of the tribes (27:16-24)

16 The officers over the tribes of Israel: over the Reubenites: Eliezer son of Zicri; over the Simeonites: Shephatiah son of Maacah;

17 over Levi: Hashabiah son of Kemuel; over Aaron: Zadok;

18 over Judah: Elihu, a brother of David; over Issachar: Omri son of Michael;

19 over Zebulun: Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; over Naphtali: Jerimoth son of Azriel;

20 over the Ephraimites: Hoshea son of Azariah; over half the tribe of Manasseh: Joel son of Pedaiah;

21 over the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead: Iddo son of Zechariah; over Benjamin: Jaasiel son of Abner;

22 over Dan: Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the officers over the tribes of Israel.

23 David did not take the number of the men twenty years old or less, because the Lord had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars in the sky.

24 Joab son of Zeruiah began to count the men but did not finish. Wrath came on Israel on account of this numbering, and the number was not entered in the book of the annals of King David.

The NIV calls the people listed here “officers.” The Hebrew word used is *nagiyd*, which has a wider meaning than army rank. The first time the word is used in Scripture is in connection with Saul, who became Israel’s first king. God said to Samuel: “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man

from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines.”¹⁵²

Interestingly, the total number of officers, chosen from the twelve tribes, adds up to thirteen. This is due to the fact that two were appointed from the tribe of Levi; one being from Aaron’s family.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “These tribal leaders are called *officers* (v. 12), but their exact status is unknown. Since tribal elders were not usually referred to in this way (1 Chr. 11:3; 2 Chr. 5:4), they are probably either David’s appointees or Joab’s assistants for the census (21:1-7’ cf. vv. 23-24). Against the latter, however, is the fact that Levi (v. 17) and Benjamin (v. 21) are included, though they were excluded from the census (21:6). In favor of the former is that all the remaining lists in this chapter are of royal officials. If this conclusion is correct, then verses 1-22 are evidence that the move away from traditional tribal system towards a centralized bureaucracy began in the latter years of David rather than under Solomon, as is usually thought.

It is sometimes said that the passage is patterned on Moses’ census (Num. 1:1-19) in order to show David’s census in a better light Links are found in the order of the tribes and the exclusion of those under twenty (v. 23; cf. Num. 1:3). But notable differences still exist in the order of the tribal names (e.g. Asher and Gad are omitted, Aaron is unusually included together with Levi though neither are in Num. 1, and Manasseh is divided into two). Perhaps even more significantly, whereas Moses employed leaders chosen by the tribes, David used his own army commanders (cf. 21:2).

A brief but important paragraph (vv. 23-24) explains why no statistics are given for the tribes as they were for the militia, and why nothing was *entered in the book of annals of King David* (v. 24). While it seems to have been normal practice not to count those under twenty (v. 23; cf. 23:24, 27; Num. 1:3; - the census had included fighting men only, 21:5), the fact that Joab did *not finish* the census was quite unexpected (v. 24). The point is not to transfer blame from *David* to *Joab*, but to show that behind the striking gap in official records lay the sovereign action of God. At stake was the vitality of God’s promise, first made to Abraham, to make his people innumerable (v. 23; cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4). Any unauthorized census could limit Israel’s faith and God’s freedom. David may have realized this before the counting was finished, though there is no supporting evidence, or else God sovereignly intervened to abort the project. Support for the latter interpretation comes from verse 24 and 27, with the result that God’s ‘wrath came upon Israel’ (NRSV; NEB’s ‘this brought harm upon Israel’ is an unacceptable reductionism).”

The mention of God’s promise “to make Israel as numerous as the stars in the sky” seems to be the core of this list. *Barnes’ Notes* comments: “To the general Oriental prejudice against numbering possessions, etc., there was added in the case of the Jews a special objection—a feeling that it would be irreverent to attempt to count what God had promised should be countless.” *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* adds: “The meaning is, that the census which David ordered did not extend to all the Israelites; because to contemplate such an enumeration would have been to attempt an impossibility (Gen 28:14); and, besides, would have been a daring offence to God. The limitation to a certain age was what had probably quieted David’s conscience as to the lawfulness of the measure, while its expediency was strongly pressed upon his mind by the army arrangements he had in view.”

c. The officers of the king (27:25-34)

25 Azmaveth son of Adiel was in charge of the royal storehouses. Jonathan son of Uzziah was in charge of the storehouses in the outlying districts, in the towns, the villages and the watchtowers.

¹⁵² I Sam. 9:16

- 26 Ezri son of Kelub was in charge of the field workers who farmed the land.**
27 Shimei the Ramathite was in charge of the vineyards. Zabdi the Shiphmite was in charge of the produce of the vineyards for the wine vats.
28 Baal-Hanan the Gederite was in charge of the olive and sycamore — fig trees in the western foothills. Joash was in charge of the supplies of olive oil.
29 Shitrai the Sharonite was in charge of the herds grazing in Sharon. Shaphat son of Adlai was in charge of the herds in the valleys.
30 Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of the camels. Jehdeiah the Meronothite was in charge of the donkeys.
31 Jaziz the Hagrite was in charge of the flocks. All these were the officials in charge of King David's property.
32 Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, a man of insight and a scribe. Jehiel son of Hacmoni took care of the king's sons.
33 Ahithophel was the king's counselor. Hushai the Arkite was the king's friend.
34 Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada son of Benaiah and by Abiathar. Joab was the commander of the royal army.

We could say that this list gives us a record of David's cabinet ministers, although they were not in charge of the welfare of the country as a whole.

The Tyndale Commentary states: "These officials are concerned with the administration of royal property (v. 31b) rather than with the country as a whole. ... David's wealth was derived from a wide area, from the 'Shephelah' (v. 28, NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB; *western foothills*, NIV, GNB) to the plain of Sharon (v. 29), perhaps even to the Jezreel valley (*the valley*). The officials fall into four groups: (a) two treasurers (v. 25; the same word is used as in 26:15, 17, 20, etc; cf. *storehouses*, NIV); (b) a minister of agriculture (v. 26); (c) a ministry for wine and oil (vv. 27-28); and (iv) a ministry of livestock (vv. 29-31). In v. 28, 'sycamore-figs' (REB, NEB, cf. GNB) are meant, not the European sycamore tree."

Jonathan, mentioned in v. 32, is called "David's uncle." The Hebrew word used is *dowd*, which can also mean "friend." In Song of Songs it refers to the bridegroom. The fact that he is called "a scribe" could mean that he served as David's secretary. Jehiel was the tutor of David's sons. We could say that those young men were "homeschooled."

It is stated that Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada as David's counselor. The details about Ahithophel's involvement in Absalom's insurrection are not given here. Ironically, according to *The International Bible Encyclopedia*, his name could be interpreted to mean "brother of foolishness." It is assumed that he was the grandfather of Bathsheba. He was considered to be one of the most authoritative of David's counselors. We read about him: "The advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God."¹⁵³ When Absalom disregarded Ahithophel's advice, Ahithophel committed suicide.¹⁵⁴ That was the reason he was replaced by Jehoiada and Abiathar.

Hushai is mentioned as David's personal friend. For a person placed in the highest position, as David was, it was important to have someone in which he could confide. Hushai must have been that man.

Joab was the army's supreme commander. He was David's nephew, the son of David's sister. He was totally dedicated to David, but he was a scoundrel without moral restrictions. He murdered Abner whom he felt to be a threat to his position as commander-in-chief. David was unable to rid himself of

¹⁵³ II Sam. 16:23

¹⁵⁴ II. Sam. 17:23

Joab. One of the reasons for this was that Joab helped him to cover up David's affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states about Joab's Character: "In summing up Joab's character, we must remember the stirring times in which he lived. That he was a most able general, there is no doubt. He was, however, very jealous of his position, and this accounts for Amasa's murder, if not partially for that of Abner too: if he was afraid that Abner would supplant him, that fear may be held to be justified, for Amasa, who had not been too loyal to David did take Joab's place for a time. But blood revenge for Asahel's death was perhaps the chief cause. Yet even when judged in the light of those rough times, and in the light of eastern life, the murder of Abner was a foul, treacherous deed."

xi. David's final preparations for the temple (28:1 – 29:25)

a. David speaks about the temple builder (28:1-10)

1 David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors.

2 King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it.

3 But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'

4 "Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel.

5 Of all my sons — and the Lord has given me many — he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.

6 He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

7 I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time.'

8 "So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God: Be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever.

9 "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

10 Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work."

To put these verses in the right perspective, *The Tyndale Commentary* writes: "Chapter 28 resumes the preparations for temple building which were left off at the end of chapter 22. It comprises three speeches by David: (a) verses 1-10, addressed primarily to the leaders and confirming Solomon as

the person divinely chosen to build the temple; (b) verses 11-19, addressed to Solomon, explaining the divinely given plan for the temple; (c) verses 20-21, a final exhortation to Solomon to begin the work.”

The Hebrew text uses the word *sar* for “officials.” It is a general term for anyone occupying a high position. The “officers over the tribes” are called “princes” in the Hebrew text, but that does not necessarily mean that they were of royal blood. They must have been the ones who represented each of the twelve tribes that constituted the nation of Israel. The highest army personnel was invited, including, what we would call colonels, majors and captains. The administrators of the personal property of David and his family were high ranking civilians. The Hebrew word for “palace officials” is *cariyc*, which refers to a eunuch. They were the men in charge of the king’s harem, the servants of the queens. Added to the group were some who had been decorated for heroic feats performed in war. They are called “valiant men” and “mighty men.”

Addressing them, David rose to his feet. The fact that the point of David’s address was the construction of the temple of the Lord meant that David did not consider himself to be the king but the servant. He stood up to honor God. This must have cost him some physical effort. *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* observes: “He was now very old and chiefly confined to his bed, (see 1 Kings 1:47) and while he was addressing his son Solomon, he continued on the bed; but when all the principal nobles of his kingdom came before him he received strength to arise and address them, standing on his feet.” Being an octogenarian and in good health at the time of writing this, I find Clarke’s observation about David’s age amusing. He was seventy years of age when he died.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “The expression, *David the king stood up upon his feet*, probably means to emphasize the fact that hitherto, having been in a sitting or recumbent position, owing to his age and infirmity, he now with effort forced himself to stand in the presence of the unusual congregation and in consideration of what he felt was due to the occasion. He had not lost the man and the brother in his official and exalted rank, and, following ancient precedents (... Genesis 29:4; ... Judges 19:23; ... 2 Samuel 19:12), he addresses the congregation as *my brethren, and my people*. David says he had it in his heart to build a house of rest, *i.e.* an abiding house (... Psalm 132:8, 14) for the *ark of the covenant*, instead of the moving one, and for the *footstool of our God*. By this he means the mercy-seat, to which especial allusion is made ver. 11 (*kapporeth*). God is often spoken of as ‘dwelling between the cherubim,’ and sometimes (... Psalm 99:1) as ‘*sitting* between the cherubim,’ which were over the *lid* of the ark, called the mercy-seat.”

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “Of the leaders mentioned in verse 1, the tribal officers, those who served the king, the military commanders, and those in charge of royal property all occur in chapter 27, while the leading soldiers are probably those listed in 11:10 – 12:40.

The first speech is addressed primarily to the leaders (vv. 2-8) and then briefly to Solomon (vv. 9-10). David’s unusual form of address, *my brothers and my people* (v. 2), identifies the king with his people, with the king like everyone else under divine order (cf. vv. 7-10; Deut. 17:18-20). The main part of the speech is really a development of David’s private address to Solomon in 22:7-13. Like 22:7-13, its foundation is an exposition of the Davidic covenant (1 Chr. 17). For example, three crucial issues from the earlier speech are repeated, *viz.* David’s inability to build the temple (vv. 2-3; cf. 22:7-8), Solomon as David’s rightful successor (vv. 4-5; cf. 22:9), and therefore Solomon as the temple builder (v. 6; cf. 22:10). Some phrases also are repeated verbatim, e.g. *I had it in my heart to build a house* (v. 2, cf. 17:2, 22:7-8), Solomon as David’s rightful successor (vv. 4-5; cf. 22:7-8) and *he [i.e. Solomon] is the one who will build my house* (v. 6; cf. 17:2, 22:7); *You are not to build a house* (v. 3; cf. 17:4; 22:10). In contrast to the hasty arrangements for Solomon’s anointing (1 Kgs 1:28-53), Solomon is now deliberately and publicly confirmed as one who not merely holds the key to both houses of God’s promise, but who is himself the key.

These speeches, however, are certainly not vain repetition. On four key points, David goes far beyond what was said previously.

(a) First, a new dimension of the idea of ‘rest’ is expounded (vv. 2-3). The temple is described, for example, as a *house of rest* and *God’s footstool* (v. 2, cf. NRSV, RSV; cf. Ps. 132:7, 8, 14), expressions which are found only in Chronicles (cf. 2 Chr. 6:41-42) and Ps. 132. Further, God’s resting-place is meant, in place of the more usual symbol of the ark for Israel’s rest (22:9; 23:25; cf. Deut. 12:8-11). Israel’s rest therefore cannot be thought of apart from God’s rest. As in the case of God’s sabbath rest at creation (Gen. 2:1-3), God’s rest represents the completion of his work. The idea of rest was so significant for the temple that even though David’s role as a ‘man of war’ (v. 3, JB) was a vital part of the temple preparation in creating the necessary conditions for the work, it disqualified him from building the temple himself. Only Solomon, the ‘man of rest’ (22:9), was sufficiently fitted for the task....

(b) This leads into David’s main theme, Solomon’s election (v. 4). It is unparalleled in the Old Testament to read of the divine choice of any individual king after David. Yet here, the verb ‘to choose’ occurs five times (vv. 4-10), three times of Solomon himself. He was chosen to sit on God’s throne (v. 5), to be God’s (adopted) son (v. 6), and to build the temple (v. 10, cf. v. 4). Divine election in the Old Testament represents selection for a specific task, clearly here to build the temple. It has little to do with a person’s innate qualities or achievements. For example, whenever the corresponding verb *he was pleased to* (v. 4) has God as its subject, any personal object is always described as helpless, humble, fearing or serving God (e.g. Pss 44:3; 147:11; 149:4; Isa. 42:1). Very frequently too, there is an element of surprise in God’s choice. The mention of David’s *many sons* (v. 5), among whom Solomon was by no means the eldest (cf. 2 Sam. 3:2-3; 5:13-16), is one instance of this. Others occur in the unsavory circumstances surrounding his birth (2 Sam. 11:1 – 12:25) and his accession (1 Kgs 1). This divine right of kings, as it is developed here, is far from giving unqualified approval to the king’s every move. Rather it confirms that despite Solomon’s weaknesses, God was still working out his own purposes through him. Furthermore, Solomon’s election was not an isolated act. God had also chosen his father and his tribe, *Judah* (Gen. 49:10; cf. 1 Chr. 2:3 – 4:23). This was of great significance for post-exile Israel through Zerubbabel and his family (cf. 1 Chr. 3:19; Hag. 2:23).

(c) The sense of God’s overarching purpose leads to another new feature, the reference to *the throne of the kingdom of the LORD* (v. 5; ‘... of the LORD’s sovereignty,’ REB, NEB). This important idea was hinted at in 17:14 (cf. also 29:11, 23; 2 Chr. 13:8, etc.), but now it explicitly confirms the link between God’s throne and David’s. God’s kingdom would be represented jointly by Solomon and the temple. Indeed, in the Chronicler’s own time, when Solomon and the Davidic monarchy had long since disappeared, the temple remained the chief symbol of the continuing reality of the kingdom of the Lord....

(d) Finally, David dwells at length on the need of the leaders (v. 8) as well as Solomon (vv. 7, 9-10) for obedience (cf. 22:12-13). Obedience to *all the commands of the LORD your God* (v. 8) was the condition for Israel’s continued occupation of the Promised Land. For Solomon, the priority was to *build a temple as a sanctuary* (v. 10). These demands undermine neither Solomon’s election nor God’s unconditional promise (17:13-14). On the contrary, they make the promise effective. Election in the Old Testament is for service, and the way for Solomon to make his ‘calling and election sure’ was to *acknowledge, serve, and seek God* (v. 9).”

The fact that David had not been allowed to build a temple for the Lord must have been very difficult for David to accept. His elaborate preparations in getting ready the blueprint and gathering much material for the construction, as well as his substantial contribution of personal funds are indication of the fact that the temple was very much on his heart.

God gave him the reason for which he was not allowed to carry out the project, which was that he was a warrior and had shed blood. The point is that God hates death. He is the God of life. It was not that David had disobeyed God in killing Israel's enemies. Israel's enemies had been God's enemies. But the place where God was to be worshipped could not be built by a man who had blood on his hands.

The temple was to be a monument of stone, representing God's actual temple, which would be the incarnation of God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus could say to the people of His day: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Not understanding His words, they replied: "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" The writer of the story, John, states: "But the temple he had spoken of was his body."¹⁵⁵ And John writes about Jesus: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men."¹⁵⁶

V. 4 reads literally in the Hebrew text: "Howbeit, the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel. He has chosen Judah forever [to be] the ruler: and the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked to make me king over all Israel."

The word with which the sentence opened is "yet," which expresses David's amazement at God's choice of himself and his family. He seems to acknowledge that he couldn't see anything in himself that would make God want to put him above anybody else in Israel. It was that humility that made David great as the man after God's own heart.

David cannot have known or understood that the temple he had projected and in which he hoped God would make His abode, would ultimately become the man, born from his own seed in whom all God's fullness would dwell.¹⁵⁷

The Pulpit Commentary comments on David's words concerning Solomon as the son who would succeed him as king of the nation: "David mentions himself as the elect of God among all the members of his father's family, and from thence is led to trace the call from the first, by the following steps: — The tribe of Judah (... Genesis 49:8; ... 1 Chronicles 5:2); the house of *Jesse* (... 1 Samuel 16:1); thirdly, of *himself* (... 1 Samuel 16:13); and lastly of Solomon (... 1 Chronicles 22:9, 10; 17:11-14; ... 2 Samuel 7:12-16). The exact time and method of David's receiving the identification of Solomon as the son to succeed him, is nowhere given. *The throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*. This expression, not found in its entirety elsewhere, is an emphatic statement here of the true theocracy, which should have ever prevailed among the people of Israel, and which is now paralleled by the kingship of the Lord in his own Church (... 1 Chronicles 17:14; 29:23). The solemn and most distinct proviso, *If he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day*, reminds us of ... Psalm 132:12. This proviso is emphatically presented again to the attention of Solomon, when the time comes for the direct appeal of God to him (... 1 Kings 3:14; 8:61; 9:4)."

David's quotation of what God had said to him regarding the building of a temple was not verbatim. David said it the way he understood it. The prophecy Nathan had given David read literally: "When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever."¹⁵⁸ That prophecy would ultimately be fulfilled by Jesus Christ, of whom Solomon would be the forerunner.

¹⁵⁵ See John 2:19-21.

¹⁵⁶ John 1:4

¹⁵⁷ Col. 1:19

¹⁵⁸ 1 Chron 17:11-14

Solomon, who was probably the fourth son born of David's marriage with Bathsheba, was not the natural pretender to the throne. His anointing as the new king happened at the time when David was on his deathbed. It seems to have been more David's love for Bathsheba than anything else that had made David promise that Bathsheba's son would be the next king.¹⁵⁹

That makes the Chronicler's statement here difficult to place. David was definitely not on his deathbed when he addressed the nation here. The point in this chapter, however, is not the ascension to the throne, but the building of the temple.

In vv. 9 and 10 David addresses Solomon personally in the presence of the crowd. *The Tyndale Commentary* comments: "Solomon's response, typical of humanity, was inconsistent. Though he did seek God (2 Chr. 1:5), it was not with a 'whole heart' (v. 9, RSV, REB, NEB; cf. 1 Kgs 11:4, 6), and his divided devotion led ultimately to a divided kingdom (cf. v. 8). In a sense, his fate was little better than that which befell Saul ..., but there were two significant differences between Solomon and Saul. Solomon was obedient in his primary task of building the temple, and his kingdom was sustained by God's covenant mercy. Chronicles highlights both features, though God's faithfulness is the more crucial (1 Chr. 17:13; 2 Chr. 6:1-11)."

b. David tell Solomon God's plan (28:11-19)

11 Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement.

12 He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the Lord and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.

13 He gave him instructions for the divisions of the priests and Levites, and for all the work of serving in the temple of the Lord, as well as for all the articles to be used in its service.

14 He designated the weight of gold for all the gold articles to be used in various kinds of service, and the weight of silver for all the silver articles to be used in various kinds of service:

15 the weight of gold for the gold lampstands and their lamps, with the weight for each lampstand and its lamps; and the weight of silver for each silver lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand;

16 the weight of gold for each table for consecrated bread; the weight of silver for the silver tables;

17 the weight of pure gold for the forks, sprinkling bowls and pitchers; the weight of gold for each gold dish; the weight of silver for each silver dish;

18 and the weight of the refined gold for the altar of incense. He also gave him the plan for the chariot, that is, the cherubim of gold that spread their wings and shelter the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

19 "All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the Lord upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan."

We must again bear in mind that these verses are written for the benefit of the Jews who returned from captivity. They found themselves at the place where the temple had stood, but where only a few stones remained as a monument of what had been. They stood at the place of God's revelation on earth.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: "This paragraph forms the chapter's focus, despite the fairly lengthy list of constructional details which have little outward appeal for most modern readers. It is all

¹⁵⁹ See I Kings 1:29-34.

about the temple plan (Heb. *tabnît*), a word which occurs four times (vv. 11, 12, 18, 19). Two aspects of this plan are brought out. First, it was given by divine revelation. This is clear from v. 19, where David is spoken of in prophetic terms (*from the hand of the LORD upon me*; cf. e.g. Ezek. 40:1), receiving all the details *in writing*. It is also probably the sense of verse 12, where a reference to God's Spirit (*all that the Spirit had put in his mind ...*) is preferable to 'all he had in mind' (REB, NEB, NRSV, RSV, etc.). The vocabulary and theology of verse 12a and verse 19 are quite similar, and together they form a kind of inclusion. 'Spirit' is used with the same sense in 1 Chronicles 12:18 (EVV, MT, v. 19), and the unusual expression, literally 'the spirit with him,' may also point in this direction.

Secondly, the manner of this revelation forms a pattern similar to that for the Tent (Exod. 25:9, 40) and Ezekiel's visionary temple (especially Ezek. 40:1-4; 42:10-11). The word 'plan,' for example, occurs with one exception (2 Kgs 16:10) only here and in Exodus 25:9, 40 (is *toknit*, 'measurement,' in Ezek. 43:10 also in mind?). Each revelation included comprehensive details (vv. 12, 19; Exod. 25:9; Ezek. 40:4) and a command to do the work (vv. 10, 20; Exod. 25:40; Ezek. 43:11). Instructions about the temple furnishings of vessels (Heb. *kêlîm*, v. 13; Ezek. 43:11) offer further points of contact. David therefore fulfils a prophetic ministry like that of Moses and Ezekiel.

The detailed instructions fall into three parts, concerning the temple architecture (vv. 11-12), its personnel (v. 13), and its contents (vv. 14-18). The most striking feature of its structure is the reference (v. 11) to the *place of atonement* (NIV), 'room for the mercy seat' (NRSV, RSV) or 'shrine of expiation' (REB, NEB). This term is only used here outside the Pentateuch (e.g. Exod. 25:17ff.), strengthening the conceptual link between the Tent and the temple. It is also a reminder that the temple was a 'temple for sacrifices' (2 Chr. 7:12), and a place of forgiveness and healing (2 Chr. 7:14). As such, it gave hope to all the guilty, including the king (1 Chr. 21; cf. 2 Sam. 11 – 12) and the nation (cf. 1 Chr. 10:13-14; 2 Chr. 36:14, 16). Inclusion of *the priests and Levites* (v. 13) is a little unexpected, but in the light of chapters 25 – 26 it is not out of place (cf. the mention of *storerooms* in v. 11 and 26:15, 17, 20, 22). Post-exilic Israelites seem to have had a special interest in the temple *articles* (NIV, JB), 'vessels' (REB, NEB, NRSV, RSV) or 'utensils' (GNB), cf. verses 14-18 with 2 Chronicles 36:18; Ezra 1:7-11; 7:19; 8:24-34. They represented both continuity with pre-exilic worship and the fact that the temple was fully operational. Most of these articles are specifically said to have been completed by Solomon's craftsmen (2 Chr. 3:10-13 and 4:6-22).

Two are worthy of special comment. Mention is made fairly frequently in Chronicles of the *tables* for the 'showbread' (RSV) or *consecrated bread* (NIV) (v. 16; cf. 1 Chr. 9:32; 23:29; 2 Chr. 2:4; 4:19; 13:11). The bread signified God's presence and his constant provision for his people. A *chariot* (v. 18) is unknown elsewhere as part of the temple furniture, but its connection with the winged *cherubim* suggests the idea of God's mobile throne (cf. Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 1:15ff.). The Chronicler's readers will have been greatly encouraged by these allusions to God's majesty and his provision."

c. David commissions Solomon (28:20-21)

20 David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.

21 The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command."

The two Hebrew words David uses to encourage Solomon in regards to the task ahead of him are *chazaq* and *'amats*. *Chazaq* contains an element of help and encouragement. It first occurs in Scripture in the story of Lot leaving Sodom. We read: “When he hesitated, the men *grasped* his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.”¹⁶⁰ There is a suggestion of divine support.

'Amats speaks of strength that can be either positive or negative. It has a sense of superiority, as in the verse where God reveals to Rebecca that she is pregnant with twins and that the younger will be stronger than the older.¹⁶¹ It has also an element of divine assistance. Solomon will not be on his own as king over Israel.

David’s encouragement of Solomon pertained particularly to the task of building a place of worship. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit no one would be able to even call upon the Lord, let alone prepare a place where this could be done. God was preparing to reveal Himself anew to Israel and to the world, but He involved human beings to prepare the place for Him.

Israel had been chosen to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”¹⁶² in this world and we, as New Testament Christians, are to be God’s temple, with God’s Spirit living in us.¹⁶³

There is also a note of personal testimony in David’s admonition to Solomon. He does not simply say “God be with you!” But “the Lord God, my God, is with you.” David had the testimony of a lifetime to back up this admonition. From the human side all sections of the population had declared themselves to be willing to assist in the building project. The priests and Levites head the list for obvious reasons. The temple will be their place of ministry. David also mentions a group of skilful volunteers and people in leadership positions. The Hebrew text uses the word *sar*, which can refer to anyone in a high-placed position.

Concluding its observations about chapter twenty-eight, *The Tyndale Commentary* writes: “A joyful and momentous climax to David’s reign is reached in 1 Chronicles 29 as the nation assembles to contribute to the temple fund (vv. 1-9) and confirm Solomon as king (vv. 21-25). At its centerpiece is a prayer of David’s (vv. 10-20) which has rightly been described as ‘among the most beautiful and impressive of all the biblical prayers.’ Its effect is to draw attention away from David, Solomon, and the temple to the God who has made all their achievements possible (cf. v. 14). Some of its phraseology has even found its way into the Lord’s Prayer (cf. v. 11). The chapter ends with a summary of some of the basic facts of David’s reign (vv. 26-30).

Verses 21-29 form an echo of the opening section of David’s reign (chs. 10 – 12), and the two passages together make a large-scale inclusion. Both passages speak of God’s sovereignty over Israel’s monarchy, for example, though, while David received the kingdom through a change of dynasty (10:6, 13-14), Solomon’s place on the ‘throne of the LORD’ (29:23) signified the permanence of David’s house. The ‘all Israel’ theme is also prominent (cf. 11:1-3; 12:38-40, with 29:21-26 where the phrase occurs four times), a unity that is strengthened by the support of former enemies (cf. 12:18; 29:24). Further parallels are the mention of prophetic support (11:1-3; 12:18; 29:29) and the generously provided meals joyfully consumed by the entire people (12:39-40; 29:22). While it is true that this is a very different account of David’s end from that in Kings (1 Kgs 1:1 – 2:12), Chronicles’ aims are also quite different. The Chronicler’s purpose is to draw attention to God’s sovereign control of David and

¹⁶⁰ Gen. 19:16

¹⁶¹ Gen. 25:23

¹⁶² Ex. 19:6

¹⁶³ See I Cor. 3:16.

Israel throughout David's reign in spite of some of his difficulties (cf. especially 2 Sam. 11 – 12; 1 Chr. 21). God's power has been made perfect in David's weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8)."

d. David's appeal for Israel's consecration (29:1-5)

1 Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God.

2 With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God — gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble — all of these in large quantities.

3 Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple:

4 three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings,

5 for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?"

These verses are basically an appeal for free-will offerings. David declares his contribution for the building of the temple, which amounts to a substantial offering. In modern terms David would be considered a billionaire. The amounts of gold and silver add up to a large sum. TLB paraphrases the "three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver" as "millions of dollars of gold from Ophir and huge amounts of silver."

Barnes' Notes observes: "The amount of silver is not indeed improbable, since its value would not exceed three millions of our money; but as the gold would probably exceed in value thirty millions, we may suspect an error in the words 'three thousand.'" What the learned doctor is saying is that the amount would be so astronomical that it could hardly be correct.

The Pulpit Commentary puts the value of the gold David contributed at "the equivalent of thirteen millions and a half of our money." And that would be a calculation of the price of gold before the gold standard was abandoned as the basis of all financial transactions, which is about a century ago.

e. Gifts for the temple (29:6-9)

6 Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly.

7 They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron.

8 Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the Lord in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite.

9 The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

V. 6 gives a list of three specific sections of Israel who responded to David's appeal for contributions. "The leaders of families" probably refers to representatives of the twelve tribes. The

Hebrew text calls them literally: “The chiefs of and the princes of and the fathers of the tribes of Israel.” They seem to be contrasted to the military leaders. *The Tyndale Commentary* observes: “The leaders are those listed in chapter 27 (especially vv. 1, 16, 31), while Jehiel the treasurer is mentioned in 23:8; 26:21.”

The amount of gold given is stated as five thousand talents and ten thousand darics. The last word particularly catches our attention. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* writes that it is “A Persian gold coin about a guinea or five dollars in value. The first form of the word occurs in 1 Chron 29:7; Ezra 2:69, and Neh. 7:70-72; the second in Ezra 8:27 and is rendered, ‘dram’ in the King James Version and ‘daric’ in the Revised Version (British and American). In the passage in Chronicles, it must refer to a weight, since at the time of David there were no coins, but in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah the Persian darics were current.” *The Tyndale Commentary* adds: “The inclusion of gold *darics* (v. 7), a coin first minted under Darius I (522–486 BC) and not before 515 BC, is an obvious post-exilic usage, presumably replacing an older equivalent.” TLB circumvents to “daric problem” by referring to it as “foreign currency.”

The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary comments: “Our historian uses the words used in his time to designate the current gold coins, without intending to assume that there were darics in use in the time of David, to state in a way intelligible to his readers the amount of the sum contributed by the princes. This perfectly correct remark does not, however, explain why the author of the Chronicle has stated the contribution in gold and that in silver in different values, in talents and in darics, since the second cannot be an explanation of the first, the two sums being different. Probably the sum in darics is the amount which they contributed in gold pieces received as coins; the talents, on the other hand, probably represent the weight of the vessels and other articles of gold which they brought as offerings for the building.”

The main point is that the contribution made by the people was substantial, but it is assumed that the people’s contribution amounted to a total that was smaller than David’s personal gift.

The total amount contributed caused both people and king to rejoice greatly, since it was an indication of a willingness to give sacrificially.

f. David’s prayer (29:10-20)

10 David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

12 Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

15 We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.

16 O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

18 O Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.

19 And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided."

20 Then David said to the whole assembly, "Praise the Lord your God." So they all praised the Lord, the God of their fathers; they bowed low and fell prostrate before the Lord and the king.

The Tyndale Commentary observes about David's prayer: "This magnificent prayer demonstrates beyond contradiction that Chroniclers' priority is with the heart of worship rather than its form. Its interest is centered not on David or the temple, but on God himself and his kingdom. Since the prayer majors on both praise and petition, it is difficult to categorize, except that rather like Psalm 145 it is a psalm of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is not only an object of praise (vv. 10-13) but the source of the wealth from which contributions have been made for the temple fund (vv. 14-16). Even David's request (vv. 17-19) that future generations might maintain the same attitude to God appeals to God's sovereignty (*O LORD, God of ... Abraham, Isaac, and Israel*, v. 18). The language is full of Old Testament quotations and allusions, reflecting the usage of the Chronicler's time as well as David's, but it is impossible to be certain of the precise origin and date of every phrase."

The Hebrew text reads that David "blessed" Yahweh. The word used is *barak*, which literally means "to kneel." The verb is also used for God, as in: "So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God *blessed* them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.'"¹⁶⁴

God is addressed as "Lord, God of Israel, our father." Jacob is obviously singled out because the nation received her name from him and not from Abraham or Isaac.

In an effort to describe the indescribable, David mentions particularly God's greatness, power, glory, majesty and splendor. The Hebrew word for "greatness" is *geduwlah*, which elsewhere is rendered with "recognition," as in: "'What honor and *recognition* has Mordecai received for this?' the king asked."¹⁶⁵ "Power" is the rendering of the Hebrew word *gebuwrah*, which can be rendered "victory" as in "Moses replied: 'It is not the sound of *victory*, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear.'"¹⁶⁶ "Glory" is the translation of the Hebrew word *tiph'arah*, which is derived from a word meaning "ornament." We find it for the first time in Scripture in the description of Aaron's garment as high priest. "Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and *honor*."¹⁶⁷ "Majesty" translates the Hebrew word *netsach*, which stands for a bright goal toward which one travels. The word is first used in the verse: "He who is the *Glory* of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."¹⁶⁸ "Majesty" in Hebrew is *howd*, which is used in the transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua, when God says: "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire

¹⁶⁴ Gen. 1:21, 22

¹⁶⁵ Est. 6:3

¹⁶⁶ Ex. 32:18

¹⁶⁷ Ex. 28:2

¹⁶⁸ I Sam. 15:29

assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your *authority* so the whole Israelite community will obey him.”¹⁶⁹ Finally, “splendor” is another word for “kingdom,” *mamlakah* in Hebrew. It is used in describing Nimrod, whose *kingdom(s)* were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar.¹⁷⁰

In all this David makes an effort to praise God for who He is, recognizing that he is unable to do this in a sufficient and satisfactory manner.

David felt no pride in the fact that he gave sacrificially to God. He felt actually humbled by it and asked himself the question “Who am I that I, a puny human creature, would be able to give anything that would have any value for the God who has created all and owes it all?”

David’s question is the most profound one any human being can ask. The ultimate issue is not that we give something to God, but that we give ourselves to Him. And that raises the question, what is there in me that God could desire?

There is a rather difficult verse in James’s Epistle that reads in the RSV: “Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?’” The NIV reads: “Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?” A footnote gives the alternate reading: “Or that God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us; or that the Spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously.”

God created us in His own image. We read: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”¹⁷¹ It is God’s image in us that makes us valuable to God. Our sinful nature has distorted that image, but it has not wiped it out and God is bent on restoring it to its original glory.

David’s amazement was caused by this distortion. We may give to God because He loves us. The realization of this love will ultimately allow us to give ourselves in an act of total surrender.

The Tyndale Commentary observes: “‘All things come from you, and of your own have we given you’ (v. 14, NRSV). Not for the first time, a new awareness of God’s nature and purposes brings a new awareness of oneself and one’s actions (the questions, *Who am I, and who are my people*, v. 14, are almost identical to those in an earlier prayer, cf. 17:16, 21). It is a sign of maturity to recognize that everything good, including material success and acts of human kindness, is God’s gift, as the gift of Jesus supremely shows (cf. 2 Cor. 9:15). Even Israel’s generosity was inspired by God’s grace (vv. 14, 16). David confirms the point by two specific examples. First (v. 15), he reminds his readers by quoting from the Psalms that they do not have rights either to the Promised Land, where they are still *aliens and strangers* (Ps. 39:12; cf. 1 Chr. 16:19-20 and 22:2!), or even to life itself, which remains as fleeting as a *shadow* (cf. Ps. 102:11). Further, these are not just matters of socio-political status or a metaphor for the general status of believers, but a recognition that a person’s actual physical situation as well as his or her spiritual standing owes everything to God’s generosity. Secondly, even *all this abundance* (v. 16) of the temple gifts cannot be thought of as an unsolicited offering, for that too *comes from your hand*.”

V. 15 may sound strange to us. The Hebrew text reads literally: “For we are strangers and sojourners, before you, as were all our fathers: as a shadow [are] our days on earth and there is none abiding.” The Hebrew word rendered “stranger” is *ger*, which can also mean “a guest.” The word is first used in Scripture in God’s words to Abraham about Israel in Egypt: “Know for certain that your descendants will be *strangers* in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four

¹⁶⁹ Num. 27:18-20

¹⁷⁰ Gen. 10:10

¹⁷¹ Gen. 1:27

hundred years.”¹⁷² “Sojourner” is the translation of the Hebrew word *towshab*, meaning someone who is not a native citizen. Abraham used the word about himself as he tried to buy a piece of land from the Hittites to bury Sarah.¹⁷³ The Hebrew word *miqveh*, which the NIV renders “hope,” is a strange word which has a variety of meanings. It can mean “water,” as in “God called the dry ground ‘land,’ and the gathered *waters* he called ‘seas.’”¹⁷⁴ But also “horse” as in “Solomon’s *horses* were imported from Egypt and from Kue—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue.”¹⁷⁵ But in another context it can mean “hope,” as in: “Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, ‘We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still *hope* for Israel.’”¹⁷⁶

In v. 16 David repeats what he had said in v. 14: “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” It is important for us to recognize that we are not possessors but borrowers. Nothing we “own” belongs to us in reality. David expressed this in one of the psalms he composed: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”¹⁷⁷

Even the air we breathe belongs to Him. In another psalm, he said: “These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.”¹⁷⁸ This total dependence upon God ought to determine our basic relationship with Him. But for many people it does not.

The fact that nothing we handle belongs to us, but is given to us in loan, means that we will have to give account of the way we use things. That fact also forms the basis for our tithing. Giving a tithe of all we have to the Lord expresses the recognition that we are not the real owners. It all belongs to Him; we take it from His hand and give it back to Him.

In v. 17 David states that God is more interested in our motives for giving than in the gift. The verse reads literally in Hebrew: “You try the heart and have pleasure in uprightness.” The Hebrew word used is *meysnar*, which can be rendered “evenness,” or “rectitude.” The term suggests that giving to God is the right thing to do. Even more importantly, it is an expression of love. David thanks God for the fact that his example of generosity inspired the whole nation to give generously to the construction of the temple.

In calling God, “Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel,” he not only refers to the history of the nation, but to God’s faithfulness toward Israel. He recognizes that love and loyalty to God is God’s gift. It is not the fruit of human nature, but of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. That means it is something we can ask God to give to us.

In all this, we must keep in mind that David is praying for a project he would never see himself. May we assume that God allowed him to look down from heaven when the temple was built? It would certainly have added to his joy of salvation. David did not build the temple, but without David there would not have been a temple.

David realized that Solomon could not inherit David’s passion for the project of temple building unless God put that in his heart. So he prayed that God would give to Solomon a “wholehearted

¹⁷² Gen. 15:13

¹⁷³ Gen. 23:4

¹⁷⁴ Gen. 1:10

¹⁷⁵ I Kings 10:28

¹⁷⁶ Ezra 10:2

¹⁷⁷ Ps. 24:1

¹⁷⁸ Ps. 104:27-29

devotion to keep your commands.” The Hebrew text of v. 19 reads literally: “And give unto my son Solomon a perfect heart, to keep your commandments, your testimonies and your statutes, and to do all [these things], and to build the palace [for the] which I have made provision.” The Hebrew word for “commandment” is *mitsvah*, which can refer to any command, whether human or divine. It can refer to the Ten Commandments, as in the verse where God says to Moses: “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and *commands* I have written for their instruction.”¹⁷⁹ We find it referring to a human command in the verse: “But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had *commanded*, ‘Do not answer him.’”¹⁸⁰

The Hebrew word translated “testimony” is *’eduwth*. It is the name given to the Ark, the gold-covered chest that was placed in the Holy of Holies. In some cases it may refer to a feast, as in: “Sound the ram’s horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast; this is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. He established it as a *statute* for Joseph when he went out against Egypt, where we heard a language we did not understand.”¹⁸¹

The Hebrew word for “statute” is *chuqqah*, which sometimes refers to customs or practices, as in the verse: “You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their *practices*.”¹⁸²

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments on David’s prayer for God to give Solomon “a perfect heart”: “This he did, but Solomon abused his mercies.” It is true that Solomon started out right, but later in life he turned out to be too smart for his own good. He began to believe that God used him because he was so special. It was the other way around; he was special because God used him.

The Tyndale Commentary comments on v. 20: “Finally, the whole assembly responds to David’s command, *Praise the LORD your God*. As on a previous occasion (16:36), they were ready to express verbal praise to God’s *name* (cf. vv. 13, 16; 28:3), and not allow the temple to present a mute witness.”

David invited the whole nation of Israel to praise the Lord. The transfer of royal authority from David to Solomon was not meant to put either one in the limelight, but to focus on the Lord, who was the real King of Israel. The Hebrew word for “praise,” as we saw earlier, is *barak*, which literally means “to kneel.” The NIV reads: “They bowed low and fell prostrate before the Lord and the king.” The Hebrew text reads literally: “[they] bowed down their heads,” *qadad*, and “worshipped,” *shachah*, “prostrate.”

g. Solomon anointed king (29:21-25)

21 The next day they made sacrifices to the Lord and presented burnt offerings to him: a thousand bulls, a thousand rams and a thousand male lambs, together with their drink offerings, and other sacrifices in abundance for all Israel.

22 They ate and drank with great joy in the presence of the Lord that day. Then they acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time, anointing him before the Lord to be ruler and Zadok to be priest.

23 So Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king in place of his father David. He prospered and all Israel obeyed him.

¹⁷⁹ Ex. 24:12

¹⁸⁰ II Kings 18:36

¹⁸¹ Ps. 81:3-5

¹⁸² Lev. 18:3

24 All the officers and mighty men, as well as all of King David's sons, pledged their submission to King Solomon.

25 The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before.

The Tyndale Commentary comments: “The second day of the assembly (v. 21) centers on Solomon’s *anointing* (v. 22). According to MT, this took place a second time (v.22), ostensibly a more formal sequel to the rather hurried ceremony described in 1 Kings 1:28-40 (cf. 1 Chr. 23:1). However, ‘a second time’ is omitted in LXX (A), P, and Vulg., and most commentators assume that the phrase in MT is a gloss based on a misinterpretation of 1 Chronicles 23:1. Nevertheless, this view does not explain the substantial differences between the two accounts. The great public assembly and the thousands of sacrifices (v. 21) would have been impossible in the context of the ceremony at Gihon. The Chronicler was in any case not ignorant of the earlier account. There are several allusions to it, including Solomon’s appointment as *ruler* (v.22; ‘prince,’ NRSV, RSV, REB, NEB; cf. 1 Kgs 1:35; ..., and the pledged ‘allegiance’ (v. 24, NRSV, RSV) of all David’s sons. The framework of 1 Chronicles 22 – 29 is also based on 1 Kings 2:1-12, and verse 23 follows 1 Kings 2:12 closely. Finally, Solomon could not have been involved in David’s temple preparations unless his succession was acute In the light of all this, it seems more probable that Solomon was actually anointed twice (cf. David’s three anointings, 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3). Typically, Chronicles has replaced the rather personal account in Kings by emphasizing *all Israel’s* role in the succession (vv. 21, 23, 25, 26).

Zadok’s anointing (v. 22) is also a problem. Since he was already a priest in David’s cabinet (1 Chr. 18:16), he is either being promoted to high priest, or being reappointed under a new king. Abiathar could not be trusted after his involvement in Adonijah’s conspiracy, and his final downfall (1 Kgs 2:26-27; 35) would have only confirmed Zadok’s promotion. Significant changes in verse 23 from 1 Kings 2:12 (*on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David* for ‘on the throne of his father David’, and *He prospered and all Israel obeyed him* for ‘and his rule was firmly established’) show Chronicles’ interest in the theology of the turbulent events of 1 Kings 1 – 2 (cf. 1 Kgs 2:46). This recognition of the supremacy and reality of God’s kingdom ... leads to the unusual summarizing of a king’s achievements before his predecessor’s death (v. 25).”

xii. Concluding formula for David (29:26-30)

26 David son of Jesse was king over all Israel.

27 He ruled over Israel forty years — seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem.

28 He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.

29 As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer,

30 together with the details of his reign and power, and the circumstances that surrounded him and Israel and the kingdoms of all the other lands.

The mention in v. 26 that David “was king over all Israel” would have had great significance to readers returning from Babylonian captivity. It speaks in favor of the general belief that this book was written at a time when “all Israel” no longer existed geographically.

The Hebrew text of vv. 29 and 30 reads literally: “Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the

book of Gad the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.” The Hebrew word, rendered here “the book,” is *dabar*, which literally means “word.” If these prophetic words were actually written down, we have no record of them, except from what is preserved in 1 Samuel and 1 Kings.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on these verses: “These verses contain last words respecting David’s reign, its extent and its length; respecting his death and age, and the succession of Solomon; and respecting the sources of the history of himself, his reign, his people, and other countries. The words of this verse, not indeed hard to follow here, but marking the close instead of the commencement or career of *David’s reign over all Israel*, are paralleled by the earlier passage, ... 1 Chronicles 18:14; ... 2 Samuel 8:15.

In the same way the contents of this verse are paralleled by ... 1 Chronicles 3:4; ... 2 Samuel 5:5; ... 1 Kings 2:11; this last passage giving only seven years instead of the seven years and six months for the reign in Hebron.

We learn from ... 2 Samuel 5:4, 5, that David was thirty years old when he began to reign in Hebron. He must, therefore, have died in his seventy-first year. That this is called here a *good old age* shows that the length of human life had now greatly subsided. In comparison of all his successors on the thrones of Judah and of Israel, his age was clearly a ‘good old age?’”

The Tyndale Commentary observes about the source material, given as “the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer”: “Mention of the prophetic writings as a source of further information (v. 29) probably refers to the present books of Samuel and Kings, in the light of 2 Chronicles 20:34; 32:32. Prophetic interventions by these men of God are found at the major stages of Chronicles’ account of David, *viz. Samuel* at the transfer of Saul’s kingdom to David (cf. 1 Chr. 10:13; 11:3), *Nathan* in the promise of a house for David (cf. 1 Chr. 17:1-15), and *Gad* in the choice of the temple site (cf. 1 Chr. 21:9-13, 18-19). Since Israel’s contacts with the kingdoms of all the other lands (v. 30, a phrase unique to Chronicles, cf. 2 Chr. 12:8; 17:10; 20:29) were also the subject of prophetic words (1 Chr. 17:8; cf. 14:17; 18:6, 13), verses 29-30 suggest that the Chronicler is indicating that his account of David is based on the authority of God’s revelation to the prophets.”

This ends our study in First Chronicles.