

Further Preparations for the Construction of the Temple

1 Chronicles 23

1 Chronicles 23:1-26 - *"So when David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. ² And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. ³ Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and above; and the number of individual males was thirty-eight thousand. ⁴ Of these, twenty-four thousand were to look after the work of the house of the LORD, six thousand were officers and judges, ⁵ four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the LORD with musical instruments, "which I made," said David, "for giving praise." ⁶ Also David separated them into divisions among the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.*

⁷ *Of the Gershonites: Laadan and Shimei. ⁸ The sons of Laadan: the first Jehiel, then Zetham and Joel—three in all. ⁹ The sons of Shimei: Shelomith, Haziël, and Haran—three in all. These were the heads of the fathers' houses of Laadan. ¹⁰ And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. These were the four sons of Shimei. ¹¹ Jahath was the first and Zizah the second. But Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons; therefore they were assigned as one father's house.*

¹² *The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel - four in all. ¹³ The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was set apart, he and his sons forever, that he should sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him, and to give the blessing in His name forever. ¹⁴ Now the sons of Moses the man of God were reckoned to the tribe of Levi. ¹⁵ The sons of Moses were Gershon^[e] and Eliezer. ¹⁶ Of the sons of Gershon, Shebuel was the first. ¹⁷ Of the descendants of Eliezer, Rehabiah was the first. And Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. ¹⁸ Of the sons of Izhar, Shelomith was the first. ¹⁹ Of the sons of Hebron, Jeriah was the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. ²⁰ Of the sons of Uzziel, Michah was the first and Jesshiah the second.*

²¹ *The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli were Eleazar and Kish. ²² And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but only daughters; and their brethren, the sons of Kish, took them as wives. ²³ The sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth—three in all.*

²⁴ *These were the sons of Levi by their fathers' houses - the heads of the fathers' houses as they were counted individually by the number of their names, who did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and above.*

²⁵ *For David said, "The LORD God of Israel has given rest to His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever." ²⁶ And also to the Levites, "They shall no longer carry the tabernacle, or any of the articles for its service."*

Background Notes

The Lord told David that he was not to build the House of the Lord because he had been a man of war, but his son Solomon would build the Temple during a time of peace. David humbly accepted the Lord's decision. With a wonderful attitude, he began to make elaborate preparation. In 1 Chronicles 22 King David gathered building materials to prepare for Solomon's building of the Temple. He gathered together men, money, and materials in great abundance for this important project, and Solomon's Temple became one of the great wonders of the ancient world.

1 Chronicles 23:1 says that David was "*old and full of days.*" How old was David at this point? He was in his seventieth year. And that's my age right now - so I guess I've reached old age!

Verse 1 tells us that David and Solomon co-reigned for a short time. That's why, at the time of David's death, they made Solomon king "a second time." "*So they acknowledged Solomon son of David as king a second time, anointing him before the Lord to be ruler*" (1 Chronicles 29:22). For the details of the ascension of Solomon to the throne, and the foiled attempt of Adonijah to replace David as king, read the first two chapters of 1 Kings.

In chapter 23 David organized the Levites for their duties and responsibilities in the new Temple, since the Tabernacle would no longer be used. We can learn a number of spiritual lessons from David's organization of the Levites for their responsibilities in the House of the Lord, because the House of the Lord today is the Church. We are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Doctrinal Points

1. As priests, believers today are involved in worship of the Lord.

David numbered the Levites from the age of thirty years and above. The number of males was 38,000 (v3). Why was it OK for David to conduct this census, whereas the census in chapter 21 was sinful? The problem is that the census in chapter 21 was done for military purposes. The motive was pride in Israel's military strength, rather than trusting solely in the Lord for victory in battle. The census of the Levites was for the purpose of service for the Lord in the new Temple. And the Levites were not counted in the sinful census.

David divided the 38,000 Levites into three divisions, according to the three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Moses and Aaron were born in the family line of Kohath (v12-14). Remember, all priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Only descendants of Aaron were priests, so the descendants of Moses were not priests. "*Now the sons of Moses, the man of God, were reckoned to the tribe of Levi*" (v14).

The priest's job was to offer the sacrifices, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister to Him, and to give His blessing in His name forever (v13). All believers today are priests, and this is a beautiful spiritual picture of our privileges, duties and responsibilities as New Testament priests. Priesthood is not limited to a special class of clergy. "*You also, as living*

stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). And, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

As priests today, we don't offer up animals - we offer up **spiritual sacrifices**. "By Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16). Notice that praises and thanksgiving to God are spiritual sacrifices (v15), and doing good activities by sharing with others are spiritual sacrifices as well (v16). So our worship of the Lord with spiritual sacrifices is quite wide in scope! As priests, believers today are involved in worship of the Lord.

2. As Levites, believers today are involved in service to the Lord.

1 Chronicles 23:27-32 – "For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above, ²⁸ because their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers, in the purifying of all holy things and the work of the service of the house of God, ²⁹ both with the showbread and the fine flour for the grain offering, with the unleavened cakes and what is baked in the pan, with what is mixed and with all kinds of measures and sizes. ³⁰ They are to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at evening; ³¹ and at every presentation of a burnt offering to the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the New Moons and on the set feasts, by number according to the ordinance governing them, regularly before the LORD. ³² And they should attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, the needs of the holy place, and the needs of the sons of Aaron their brethren in the work of the house of the LORD."

The priests were ultimately in charge of all the items and functions of the House of the Lord. The basic job of the Levites who were **not** priests was to assist the priests - and that would be most of the men of the tribe of Levi. There was a lot of work to be done, and it was the duty and responsibility of the Levites to assist the priests. Of the 38,000 Levites, 24,000 were in charge of various areas of Temple work (v3-5). Their authority would be delegated from the priests.

Six thousand Levites were officers and judges. Remember - under the Law, 48 scattered cities were designated for the Levites, and six of these cities were "Cities of Refuge." So these 6,000 Levites would be involved in maintaining the courts of justice in their specific cities that were scattered throughout Israel. Four thousand Levites were in charge of maintaining all the gates of the Temple courts, because only priests could enter the Temple itself, and unauthorized persons were not to enter the various Temple courts. Four thousand Levites were in charge of the Temple music. Wouldn't you think that 38,000 Levites would be enough to do all the work? Apparently there was so much work that David lowered the eligibility age for Levites to serve from thirty years of age to twenty years of age. They needed more Levites! 1 Chronicles 28 tells us that the Lord directed this change, and He directed all the plans and organization for the Temple worship.

The various services of the Levites illustrate our service in the house of the Lord today. All believers have different responsibilities within the church. It may be a big responsibility, or it may be a small responsibility - but **all are important** duties.

Look at verse 29: *“Both with the showbread and the fine flour for the grain offering, with the unleavened cakes and what is baked in the pan, with what is mixed and with all kinds of measures and sizes.”* Some Levites were responsible to bake bread – bread for the golden Table of Showbread, and bread for the baked grain offerings. That job may not have seemed important, and it may have even been boring at times - but it was extremely important for the smooth running of the Temple and the proper worship of the Lord!

Doing your job as a “Levite” well is extremely important - even though it may seem small to you, and even boring at times. But as Levites, believers today are involved in service to the Lord.

Practical Application

Make singing a part of your daily devotions!

I’m assuming that you have personal time with the Lord every day. So besides Scripture and prayer, why not also sing a hymn or a song of praise? As a boy, I remember hearing my godly grandfather singing hymns of praise as part of his daily time with the Lord!

Notice that the Levites stood and sang a hymn of thanksgiving and praise every morning and every evening, as the morning and evening sacrifices were offered (v30). 2 Chronicles 29 tells us that this practice of singing with the daily sacrifices was still going on 300 years later, at the time of King Hezekiah.

Singing is a good devotional practice for “priests and Levites” today. Make singing a part of your daily devotions!