

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CHRONICLES 23

In this chapter David makes Solomon king, (^{<1320>}1 Chronicles 23:1), calls together the princes, priests, and Levites, numbers the latter, and assigns them their proper work, (^{<1321>}1 Chronicles 23:2-5), divides them into three classes, (^{<1326>}1 Chronicles 23:6-23), when the number of them was taken from twenty years of age, and upwards; the reasons of which are given, partly from the rest the land enjoyed, and partly from the several branches of their work and office in the temple, (^{<1324>}1 Chronicles 23:24-32).

Ver. 1. *So when David was old and full of days*, etc.] Perhaps was now in the last year of his age, about seventy years old, though before he was bedridden; (see ^{<1338>}1 Chronicles 28:2),

he made Solomon his son king over Israel; declared him to be his successor; this was before the affair of Adonijah, for then he ordered him to be anointed king, and placed on the throne; and this aggravated the rebellion of Adonijah, that it was against the declared and known will of his father.

Ver. 2. *And he gathered together all the princes of Israel*, etc.] Ordered them to be assembled, partly to acquaint them with his will and pleasure, that Solomon should succeed him in the kingdom; and partly to settle the order of the work and service of the temple; and therefore these were convened

with the priests and Levites; to assign to them their respective places and offices.

Ver. 3. *Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years, and upward*, etc.] So they were numbered in the days of Moses, and by his order, and so they were now at first; though afterwards there was a new reckoning of them, (^{<1324>}1 Chronicles 23:24)

and their number by their posts; or, according to their heads:

man by man, was thirty and eight thousand; which vastly exceeds the number in the times of Moses; (see ^{<4047>}Numbers 4:47,48), but then those above fifty years of age were not numbered, as they now might; since their work in the temple would be much more easy, no burdens to carry, as the ark, the vessels, etc.

Ver. 4. *Of which twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord*, etc.] To prepare for the work of the priests by slaying the sacrifices, flaying them, cutting them in pieces, and washing them, and bringing them to the altar; 1000 of these served weekly in their turns:

and six thousand were officers and judges: that acted as justices of the peace in the several parts of the country, heard causes and administered justice to the people, being trained up in and acquainted with the laws of God, civil as well as ecclesiastic; some were more properly judges, and others executioners of their sentence; see (^{<6168>}Deuteronomy 16:18 17:9).

Ver. 5. *Moreover four thousand were porters*, etc.] At the east, north, and south gates of the temple, in their turns;

and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments; were singers in the temple, which in all made up 38,000:

which I made, said David, to praise therewith; which instruments he devised and ordered to be made to praise the Lord with; (see ^{<4296>}2 Chronicles 29:26 ^{<6126>}Nehemiah 12:36).

Ver. 6. *And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi*, etc.] Into three classes, according to the number of them, which follow: namely,

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; (see ^{<10166>}Exodus 6:16).

Ver. 7. *Of the Gershonites were Laadan and Shimei*.] These two were the immediate posterity of Gershon; are the same with Libni and Shimhi, and heads of families, (^{<10167>}Exodus 6:17).

Ver. 8. *The sons of Laadan; the chief was Jehiah, and Zetham, and Joel*.] Not his immediate sons, but some that descended from him.

Ver. 9. *The sons of Shimei*, etc.] Not him that was the son of Gershon, but a descendant of Laadan, his son, as Kimchi observes:

Shelomith, and Haziël, and Haran, these were the chief of the fathers of Laadan; of the families that sprang from him.

Ver. 10. *And the sons of Shimei*, etc.] The son of Gershon, and brother of Laadan, according to Kimchi, which seems right:

were Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah; these four were the sons of Shimei; descendants of his in the times of David.

Ver. 11. *And Jahath was the chief*, etc.] The prince and head of a family: *and Ziza the second*; the same with Zina in (^{<1330>}1 Chronicles 23:10), and is there read Ziza in the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions:

but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; so as to constitute distinct families:

therefore they were in one reckoning, according to their father's house; made one family with their brethren.

Ver. 12. *The sons of Kohath*, etc.] The second son of Levi:

Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four; (see ^{<1168>}Exodus 6:18).

Ver. 13. *The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses*, etc.] A son of Kohath, (^{<1321>}1 Chronicles 23:2 ^{<1161>}Exodus 6:20)

and Aaron was separated; from the children of Israel, (^{<1231>}Exodus 28:1),

that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever; by an holy use of them, and keeping them from all unholy and profane uses; and this they were to do as long as the Aaronic priesthood lasted:

to burn incense before the Lord; in the holy place, on the altar of incense; which none but priests descended from Aaron might do:

to minister unto him; both at the altar of burnt offering and of incense; and the high priest in the holy of holies:

and to bless his name for ever, or “in his name”; that is, the people in his name; (see ^{<1163>}Numbers 6:23-27).

Ver. 14. *Now concerning Moses the man of God*, etc.] Raised up by him as a prophet, admitted to great familiarity with him, a lawgiver from him, and the ruler and guide of Israel under him through the wilderness:

his sons were named of the tribe of Levi; were only common Levites; Moses had no ambition to gratify; he sought no honour for his posterity; the civil government was left to Joshua, and the priesthood to Aaron.

Ver. 15. *The sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer.*] (see ^{<1283>}Exodus 18:3,4).

Ver. 16. *Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief.*] Of the posterity of Gershom in the times of David, called Shubael, (^{<1340>}1 Chronicles 24:20), the Targum makes him to be the same with Jonathan, (^{<17830>}Judges 18:30).
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Ver. 17. *And the sons of Eliezer were Rehabiah the chief,* etc.] The first and only begotten, as it follows:

and Eliezer had none other sons; before nor after him:

but the sons of Rehabiah were very many; or greatly multiplied; not, as the Targum says, above 600,000; the number of Israel, as the Jewish writers fancy; which they gather from (^{<1007>}Exodus 1:7 32:10 ^{<14121>}Numbers 11:21), and that though Moses deprecated the multiplication of his seed, God fulfilled it.

Ver. 18. *Of the sons of Izhar,* etc.] Another son of Kohath, the son of Levi, (^{<13212>}1 Chronicles 23:12).

Shelomith the chief; the principal descendant of Izhar at this time.

Ver. 19-21. *Of the sons of Hebron,* etc.] A third son of Kohath, (^{<13212>}1 Chronicles 23:12),

Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth: of the sons of Uzziel; another son of Kohath, (^{<13212>}1 Chronicles 23:12),

Micah the first, Jesiah the second: the sons of Merari, Mahli and Mushi, (^{<1169>}Exodus 6:19),

the sons of Mahli, Eleazar and Kish: of whom (see ^{<1348>}1 Chronicles 24:28,29).

Ver. 21. *See gill on “^{<1339>}1 Chronicles 23:19”.*

Ver. 22. *And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters,* etc.] And so none to succeed him in his office and service:

and their brethren the sons of Kish took them; married them, their uncle's sons, their own cousins.

Ver. 23. *And the sons of Mushi*, etc.] The other son of Merari:

Mahli; so called from his uncle, his father's brother:

and Eder and Jerimoth, three; mentioned again (^{<1324>}1 Chronicles 24:30).

Ver. 24. *These were the sons of Levi, after the house of their fathers*, etc.]

According to the three classes of them, as descending from the three sons of Levi:

[even] the chief of the fathers; or heads of families:

as they were counted by number of names by their polls; or according to their heads, one by one:

that did the work for the service of the house of the Lord; the particulars of which are in (^{<1328>}1 Chronicles 23:28-31)

from the age of twenty years, and upwards; they were first numbered thirty and upwards, (^{<1324>}1 Chronicles 23:3), but David before his death ordered they should be numbered from twenty and upwards, (^{<1327>}1 Chronicles 23:27), because the Israelites being increased, there would be more work for the priests in the temple, which would require the assistance of more Levites. The reasons follow.

Ver. 25. *For David said*, etc.] As a reason why he ordered a new account to be taken:

the Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto his people: from all their enemies round about, and settled rest in the land, so that there was no danger of being carried captive, as they were time after time in the days of the Judges, and whereby they became more numerous:

that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever; where the temple would always continue, and not be removed, as the ark and tabernacle had been, and where all Israel would appear three times in the year continually.

Ver. 26. *And also unto the Levites*, etc.] Or with respect to them:

they shall no more carry the tabernacle: on their shoulders, from place to place, as they had done:

nor any vessels of it for the service thereof; and so the service of it did not require men at their full strength, but such as were but twenty years of age might be employed in it.

Ver. 27. *For by the last words of David*, etc.] Or therefore by the last orders he gave before his death:

the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above; as able and sufficient to do the work of their office.

Ver. 28. *Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron*, etc.] The priests:

for the service of the house of the Lord; to assist them therein, and not to bear burdens as in times past; the Targum is,

“wherefore the place of their habitations was by the side of the sons of Aaron, for the worship of the sanctuary of the Lord:”

in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; to keep the house, and all the apartments in it, courts and chambers, clean, by sweeping and washing them, and carrying out all the filth thereof made by the sacrifices, and otherwise.

Ver. 29. *Both for the shewbread*, etc.] Also to make and get that ready every week for the priests to set on the shewbread table, when they took off the other that had stood a week, (see ^{<1002>}1 Chronicles 9:32)

and for the fine flour for meat offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried; to deliver out the flour of which these several things were made, (see ^{<1003>}1 Chronicles 9:31), and (^{<1004>}Leviticus 2:1),

and for all manner of measures and size; as the hin and the ephah, and the several parts of them for things both liquid and dry, which were in their keeping, and according to which they gave out the proper quantity of oil, and wine, and fine flour, upon occasion.

Ver. 30. *And to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord*, etc.] The office of others of them was to sing the praises of God, both vocally and with instruments of music, at the time of the morning sacrifice:

and likewise at even; at the time of the evening sacrifice, by way of thankfulness for the mercies of the night and of the day.

Ver. 31. *And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord*, etc.] This was the work of the priests to offer such sacrifices, and not the Levites; but the meaning is, according to the Targum, and so Kimchi, that these not only sung the praises of God morning and evening, but at all times when burnt offerings were offered to the Lord; besides, some of them helped the priests at such times in slaying the sacrifices, and bringing them to the altar: and especially their service was requisite

in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number; because, besides the daily sacrifices, there were additional offerings at those times:

according to the order commanded unto them continually before the Lord; (see ^{-0EX01}Numbers 28:1-29:40).

Ver. 32. *And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation*, etc.] That no unclean persons entered into it, and that none of the vessels were carried out of it; this was the business of the porters:

and the charge of the holy place; of things that belonged unto it, the vessels in it, and what was requisite for it, and used there: and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren; the priests, whatever they should command them to do: in the service of the house of the Lord; in any part and branch of it before specified.