

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 31

This chapter begins with the destruction of idolatrous worship, the appointment of the courses of the priests and Levites, and the royal bounty for sacrifices, (~~<430>~~2 Chronicles 31:1-3), next follows the order Hezekiah gave, that the people at Jerusalem, and throughout the land, should make the proper provision for the priests and Levites, as the law directed; and which was cheerfully complied with, and the firstfruits and tithes were brought in, in great abundance, insomuch that there was enough, and plenty left, (~~<430>~~2 Chronicles 31:4-10), wherefore chambers were prepared in the temple to lay it up in, and persons appointed to be the overseers of it, and to distribute it faithfully to their brethren and their families, to small and great, (~~<431>~~2 Chronicles 31:11-19), and the chapter is closed in praise of the works of Hezekiah, and the success that attended him, (~~<432>~~2 Chronicles 31:20,21).

Ver. 1. *Now when all this was finished*, etc.] The temple cleansed, the priests and Levites sanctified, the passover and feast of unleavened bread observed, and other seven days of rejoicing kept:

all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin; which had been erected by Ahaz, (~~<433>~~2 Chronicles 28:2,25) at or about this time also the brasen serpent was broke to pieces, (~~<434>~~2 Kings 18:4),

in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all; which must be understood of such cities in those tribes that had been taken in former times by the kings of Judah from the kings of Israel; or such as were now in the hands of the Assyrians, who might not concern themselves in matters of religion; or this might be done at the connivance of Hoshea king of Israel, who had no regard to any other idolatry than the worship of the calves; and besides, having met with trouble from the Assyrians, and fearing more, might be willing to have his kingdom cleared of idolatry, in hope the divine displeasure would be removed:

then all the children of Israel returned every man to his possession into their own cities; and not till then, when all monuments of idolatry were removed.

Ver. 2. *And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests, and the Levites after their courses*, etc.] As they were fixed by David, and were in the times of Jehoshaphat, and had been since interrupted, and which Hezekiah now restored, and placed them in their regular order:

every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings, and for peace offerings, to minister and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord; or camp of the Lord, where they were posted, and lay as an host encamped, to keep the watch of the house of the Lord; the priests, they were appointed to offer the sacrifices of every sort; the Levites to minister to them in what they needed and required of them, and others of them to be singers in time of service, and others to be porters at the gate.

Ver. 3. *He appointed also the king's portion of his substance*, etc.] Out of his own treasury, of his royal bounty, over and above what was usual for kings to give for their own sacrifices, the treasury of the temple being exhausted, and the people being brought into low circumstances in the last reign:

for the burnt offerings, [to wit], for the morning and evening burnt offerings; the daily sacrifice offered morning and evening, which had been neglected, but now revived:

and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts; when beside the daily sacrifice there were additional ones: as it is written in the law of the Lord; in (^{OLD}Numbers 28:9-29:40).

Ver. 4. *Moreover, he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites*, etc.] What was assigned unto them by the law of God by tithes, firstfruits, etc.

that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord; in the study of it; that they might gain greater knowledge of it themselves, and be better able to instruct the people, which of late had been much neglected; and that they might be more at leisure for such service, and be free from all worldly business, care, and distraction of mind, was the design of this edict.

Ver. 5. *And as soon as the commandment came abroad,* etc.] Not only was published in the city of Jerusalem, but the report of it, or rather that itself, was spread throughout the cities of Judah:

the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey; the three first of these are expressed in the law, (^{¶1808}Deuteronomy 18:4) but not honey; wherefore the Targum here, and the Jewish writers in general, interpret it of the “dubsa” of the palm tree, as they call it, the fruit and liquor of that, which is of a sweet taste, and which the Scenite Arabs called “dabusa”, as Pliny^{f132} from Juba relates; for so it should be read, and not “dabulan” or “dablan”, as in some copies: but though honey was forbid to be used in sacrifice, it was not forbidden to be eaten; and as the land of Judea abounded with honey, properly so called, the priests might have the firstfruits of that as of other liquors; (see Gill on ^{¶1808}Deuteronomy 8:8”),

and of all the increase of the field; of the trees of it, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, etc. as Kimchi;

and the tithe of all things; even of herbs, as the same writer, and so the Talmud^{f133}, which were free from tithes by the law, (see ^{¶1723}Matthew 23:23),

brought they in abundantly; even of all that their vineyards, oliveyards, and fields produced.

Ver. 6. *And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah,* etc.] As for the supplement “concerning”, I see no need of it; the sense is, that when the king’s edict was known by the inhabitants of the cities in the country, as well as at Jerusalem:

they also brought in the tithes of oxen, and sheep; according to the law in (^{¶1773}Leviticus 27:32)

and the tithe of holy things, which were consecrated unto the Lord their God; which Jarchi understands of the second tithe the Levites were to give to the priests; but Kimchi of things consecrated to sacred uses, and no longer for their own, and which were even free from tithing:

and laid them by heaps: heaps upon heaps, such large quantities were brought in.

Ver. 7. *In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps.* etc.] The month Sivan, as the Targum, in which month was the feast of Pentecost, called the feast of the harvest, (^{<102316>}Exodus 23:16), for then barley harvest was ended, and wheat harvest began, and the firstfruits were brought:

and finished them in the seventh month; the month Tisri, as the Targum, in which was the feast of tabernacles, sometimes called the feast of ingathering, of the fruits of the earth, the wine, oil, etc. and so a proper time for bringing the tithes of all.

Ver. 8. *And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps,* etc.] Of the tithes and firstfruits:

they blessed the Lord; for the great increase of the fruits of the earth, and for making the people so willing to bring in the dues to the priests and Levites:

and his people Israel; wished all happiness and prosperity to them, being found in the way of their duty.

Ver. 9. *Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.*] How they came to be so large, or why they let them lie where they did.

Ver. 10. *And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him,* etc.] Who was the high priest of the family of Eleazar, in the line of Zadok, made high priest in Solomon's time, when Abiathar was thrust out; Jarchi takes him to be the same Azariah that was in the days of Uzziah, (^{<14317>}2 Chronicles 26:17),

and said, since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty; which were now four mouths since; and the priests and Levites, and their families, had partaken of them, and eat to satiety, and yet there was great plenty remaining:

for the Lord hath blessed his people: the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord has blessed them,”

given them large crops this year, and a ready willing mind to bring in what is due for the service of the temple:

and that which is left is this great store; the heaps the king and princes saw, and inquired about; or what is left is for the great multitude of the priests and Levites, and their families, both at Jerusalem, and in the cities in the country; so Kimchi interprets it.

Ver. 11. *Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord*, etc.] Either to build new ones, or fit up those that were built:

and they prepared [them]; got them ready to lay up the stores in.

Ver. 12. *And brought in the offerings, and the tithes, and the dedicated things, faithfully*, etc.] Kept nothing back for their own private use, but faithfully delivered in and laid up the whole that was brought which remained; this was done by the priests and Levites, in whose hands and care they were:

over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next; these two had the charge and care of the whole, the one as deputy to the other.

Ver. 13. *And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother*, etc.] These ten were assistants to the other two, were under them, and at their command, and were to be ready at hand to do what they should order and direct them:

at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God; these were fixed in their post under the other two by the king and the high priest, to whom also the other two were accountable.

Ver. 14. *And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter towards the east*, etc.] At the east gate of the temple; (see ^{<13347>}1 Chronicles 26:17)

was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord; to the priests and Levites, for whose use they were; or to deliver out the fine flour, oil, and wine, and frankincense, for the meat and drink offerings:

and the most holy things; which belonged to the priests only to eat of, as the remainder of the meat offerings, the sin and trespass offerings, and the shewbread.

Ver. 15. *And next to him were Eden and Mijamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah,* etc.] As Kore was the principal, and his business lay chiefly with the priests in the temple, and in Jerusalem, these men under him were employed in distributing to the priests,

in the cities of the priests; in the several parts of the country:

in their set office; or faithfully:

to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small; to communicate of the stores under their hands, according to their several courses, both priests and Levites, and to all in their families, small and great.

Ver. 16. *Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upwards,* etc.] Their office was not only to give to the priests, but to those of their males in their genealogy, who were three years old and upwards; for under that age, according to Kimchi, they were not fit to come into the temple; nor have they knowledge to keep what is put into their hands; nor fit to handle offerings, lest they should defile them; but at that age they might be taught how to hold them, and be used to it; but as for females, he says, they were not admitted at any age:

even unto everyone that entereth into the house of the Lord; of the said age, and in the genealogy and register of the priests:

his daily portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses; food for every day, in consideration of their service in their several wards, according to their courses in turn.

Ver. 17. *Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers,* etc.] As to the priests registered according to their families from the age before observed, a portion was given: so to the Levites,

from twenty years old and upward, in their charges, by their courses; for though originally they were not admitted into the tabernacle till twenty five years of age, nor to officiate till thirty, but in David's time they were allowed at twenty years of age and upwards, (~~1333~~ 1 Chronicles 23:24).

Ver. 18. *And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation,* etc.] These were all genealogized and registered, wives and children, sons and daughters,

whether small or grown up; and a portion was distributed to them according to their number, greater or lesser:

for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness; which is to be understood either of the overseers, who, in their set office, faithfully distributed the holy things to the persons before described; or else to the priests, and Levites, to whom, and to whose families, the distribution was made, because they wholly devoted themselves to the holy service of God.

Ver. 19. *Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, which were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city*, etc.] Which were allowed to them out of the several tribes, and where they dwelt, when it was not the turn of their course to officiate in the temple; now to these, as well as to those in Jerusalem, a portion was distributed for the support of them and their families:

the men that were expressed by name; before mentioned, (^{<4813>}2 Chronicles 31:13), though some understand it of such as were nominated and appointed by them, and to act under them in the country:

to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites: as before declared.

Ver. 20. *And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah*, etc.] Settled the courses of the priests and Levites, and made a provision for them and their families:

and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God: or did that which was truly right and good, according to the law and will of God, in the sincerity and uprightness of his soul, and as in the presence of the omniscient God, he approving and accepting it for Christ's sake.

Ver. 21. *And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God*, etc.] In cleansing the temple, providing sacrifices, placing the priests and Levites order, taking care of the maintenance of them,

and in the law and in the commandments; in the observation of all the laws, statutes, and judgments of God, moral, ceremonial, and judicial:

to seek his God; and serve and worship him, and therein his honour and glory:

he did it with all his heart; in the most cordial, sincere, and upright manner:

and prospered; he succeeded in all he undertook, God being with him, and blessing him in his civil and religious concerns.