

1 Chronicles 23-27

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Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0 : 00] Our text tonight is a very lengthy portion of scripture, but I'm not going to read all of it because the majority of this text has within it listings of names.

Now, those names are important. Those names have meaning. But for our sake of time, I'm not going to read all of those names. And you'll see why as we make our way through the text, because we're going to be looking at First Chronicles, chapter 23, all the way to chapter 27.

It's really one big, long section of scripture that deals with one thing. And I'm afraid that if we were to try to break it up and kind of look at each individual part, it would take away from the whole.

So I'm going to read from all of it, but I'm not reading all of it. So you'll have to kind of follow along with me, OK? Because each of these chapters have a multitude of names.

We're not reading the names. If you want to go back, I encourage you to do so. You can read the names and see it from there. But I want you to see the theme. And we can catch the theme of what's going on in these chapters rather easily by reading through it.

[1 : 10] So let's put ourselves in context. David has realized that he has found the place where the temple of the Lord needs to be built.

It is after that great sin of numbering people and calling for a census really out of pride. He offers the offering on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

And the Lord answers his prayer and he realizes this is the house of God. So he begins to make preparation. We looked at that last time we were together in the text. He begins to make preparations for the construction of the temple.

He gets the stone cutters and the masons and the timbers and all these things. We were looking at it Sunday night. And he's preparing in advance for Solomon to be able to build the temple.

Which means we're kind of at this change in the nation of Israel. There's so many changes throughout the nation of Israel's history. If we look at it, there are just these moments in time where we're like, OK, things are going to change.

[2 : 09] It's a great transition time. This is one of those transition times because we are moving from tabernacle worship to temple worship. We're moving from at the present time before the temple is built.

The Ark of the Covenant is in Jerusalem. But the altar, the bronze altar, is in Gibeon. And so there's the division of even the priests. There are priests serving over there.

There are priests serving over here. But there's no one place which God had declared when the nation of Israel was going into the land that there would be one place where his name would be manifest, that everybody would be able to come to.

Because if you remember, even when we were looking at it so many years ago there, that the reality is God was setting up a place where there would be corporate worship, that the people would be able to worship together.

That's, you had the three mandatory festivals a year that every male was supposed to attend. You have other festivals throughout the year that families would attend. And the goal there is that the nation would be unified in their worship, they would come together.

[3 : 10] And so to continue that theme on, we see what David does here. The preparations for the completion and building of the temple start in chapter 22 and go away to the end of the book of 1 Chronicles, which gets us down to chapter 29.

But this section before us, chapter 23 through 27, really is dealing with the people. So I want you to see, even before we read portions of it, our title tonight would be A People Prepared to Worship.

A People Prepared to Worship. David is preparing the people, not just the people mentioned in our text, but preparing the people as a nation to be able to worship. Now, the chronicler is looking back on what David did.

This is all unique, by the way. It's not found in 1 and 2 Samuel. It's not found in 1 and 2 Kings. We have it here in the book of 1 Chronicles. It's one of the unique portions of Chronicles to the other historical writings.

And the reason is, is because it was written down in that time. Everybody kind of knew that's the way it was because it was being lived out in front of them. The chronicler is writing it down so many years after coming out of Babylonian captivity because they're trying to reestablish this worship.

[4 : 18] And so now they have the handbook right in front of them. This is who's supposed to be doing what. Right? To us, we say, well, we don't temple worship anymore. We worship in truth and spirit. I understand that.

But I want you just to see some things from this text. Okay, it says, chapter 23. Let's start in verse 1. Now, when David reached old age, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel with the priests and the Levites.

And the Levites were numbered from 30 years old and upward. And their number by census of men was 38,000. Of these, 24,000 were to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.

And 6,000 were officers and judges. And 4,000 were gatekeepers. And 4,000 were praising the Lord with instruments which David made for giving praise. David divided them into divisions according to the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Okay, so right there, now we have the listing of the names. Okay, let's go down to verse 24. These were the sons of Levi according to their father's households. Even the heads of the father's households of those of them who were counted in the number of names by their census.

[5 : 23] Doing the work for the service of the house of the Lord. From 20 years old and upward. For David said, the Lord God of Israel has given rest to his people. And he dwells in Jerusalem forever.

Also, the Levites would no longer need to carry the tabernacle and all its utensils for its service. For by the last words of David, the sons of Levi were numbered from 20 years old and upward. For their office is to assist the sons of Aaron with the service of the house of the Lord.

In the courts and in the chamber and in the purifying of all holy things. Even the work of the service of the house of God. And with the showbread and the fine flour for grain offering and unleavened wafers.

Or what is baked in the pan or what is well mixed. Or all measures of volume and size. There to stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord. And likewise at evening. And to offer all burnt offerings to the Lord on the Sabbath.

The new moons and the fixed festivals. And the numbers set by the ordinance concerning them continually before the Lord. Thus they are to keep the charge of the tent of meeting. And charge of the holy place. And charge of the sons of Aaron their relatives for the service of the house of the Lord.

[6 : 27] And when we get into verse 24. It says that the divisions of the descendants of Aaron were these. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithmar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father and had no sons.

So Eleazar and Ithmar served as priests. David with Zadok the son of Eleazar and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithmar. Divided them according to their offices for their ministry.

So he begins talking about the ministry of these priests. Okay. We can go on a little bit further. We get into verse 25.

I mean chapter 25. We get into chapter 25. Starting in verse 1. Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and Heman and Jedethon.

Who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals. And the number of those who performed their service was this. And lists the musicians. And he lists those that are there.

[7 : 24] And he does that listing until you get to the end of that chapter. Right? There's the listing of all the musicians and all the people that were there. And they were supposed to do that.

But it says in verse 6. That all these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jedethon, and Heman were under the direction of the king.

And their number who were trained in singing to the Lord and their relatives. All who were skillful was 288. And then what follows that is the casting of lots of who's going to do it when.

Chapter 26. It says for the divisions of the gatekeepers. So now we have the divisions of the gatekeepers that are set. And where the gatekeepers are gives us the listing of those divisions.

Verse 12 of the 26th chapter says, To these divisions of the gatekeepers, the chief men, were given duties like their relatives to minister in the house of the Lord. They cast lots and the small and the great alike, according to their father's households, for every gate.

[8 : 28] The lot of the east fell to Shalamiah. Then they cast lots for his son, Zechariah, a counselor with insight. And his lot came out to the north. For Obed-Edom, it fell to the south. And his sons went to the storehouse.

For Shupem and Hosah, it was to the east by the gate of Shalaktha. On the ascending highway, guard corresponding to guard.

On the east, there were six Levites. On the north, four daily. And on the south, four daily. And at the storehouse, two by two. At the parbar on the west, there were four. At the highway, and two at the parbar.

These were the divisions of the gatekeepers of the sons of Korah and of the sons of Morari. The Levites, their relatives, had charge, in verse 20, had charge of the treasures of the house of God.

And the treasures of the dedicated gifts. The sons of Laden, the sons of Gershonites belonging to Laden. Namely, the Jehillites were the heads of the father's households belonging to Laden and the Gershonites. So now we're talking about keeping the things that are brought to the temple.

[9 : 26] I know I'm going fast, but I'm going somewhere with this if you just stay with me, okay? So they were to keep that which was dedicated, it tells us, in verse 27 of the 26th chapter.

They were to keep the dedicated part of the spoil, one in battles, to repair the house of the Lord. And all that Samuel the seer had dedicated. And Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zerah.

Everyone who had dedicated anything, all of this, was in the care of Shelomoth and his relatives. So we have that work that's going on in the temple.

Then it tells us in verse 29, As for the Isharites, the Tenaniah and his sons were assigned to outside duties for Israel as officers and judges. And as for the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his relatives, 1,700 capable men, had charge of the affairs of Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the Lord and the service of the king.

And as for the Hebronites, Jerarjiah the chief, these Hebronites were investigated according to their genealogies and their father's households in the 40th year of David's reign. And men of outstanding capability were found among them at Jazer of Gilead.

[10 : 36] So they're called for the outside work. Now, we're almost done, right? Chapter 27. Now, this is the enumeration of the sons of Israel, the heads of the father's households, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all the affairs of the divisions, which came in and went out months by month throughout all the month, each division numbering 24,000 people.

So we have the listing of those who served in their divisions. And then we get down to verse 16 of the 27th chapter. Now, in the charge of the tribes of Israel, chief officer of the Reubenites.

Here's what I say. Sorry, let's go down to verse 25 because we have the officers listed for us there. But if you notice in verse, let me back it up, 23.

But David did not count those 20 years of age and under because the Lord had said he would multiply Israel as the stars of heaven. Joab, the son of Zariah, had begun to count them but did not want to finish.

And because of this, wrath came upon Israel and the number was not included in the account of the chronicles of King David. Now, that's his sin in counting. Okay, so all that sin, there's something that comes out of that.

[11 : 49] I know it's a lot, but just stay with me. We're going to catch this in just a moment. Last part, verse 25. Now, Asmabeth, the son of Adil, had charge of the king's storehouses.

And Jonathan, the son of Uziah, had charge of the storehouses in the country and in the cities, in the villages, and in the towers. Ezra, the son of Chelab, had charge of the agricultural workers who tilled the soil.

Shemaiah, the Ramethite, had charge of the vineyards. And Zabdi and Shifmiah had charge of the produce of the vineyards stored in the wine cellars. Bel-Hanan, the Gedarite, had charge of the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah.

And Joash had charge of the stores of oil. Shemtriah, the Sharonite, had charge of the cattle which were grazing in Sharon. And Shaphat, the son of Adai, had charge of the cattle in the valleys.

Obel, the Ishmaelite, had charge of the camels. And Jehadiah, the Maronite, had charge of the donkeys. Jaziz, the Hagrite, had charge of the flocks. All these were overseers of the property which belonged to King David.

[12 : 48] And then it finishes with the list of his counselors. So it's a lot of names, a lot of people. And we say, why is it here? Okay, why does this matter? I want you to see tonight.

I know you'll have to go back. I want you to go back and read through this. But I knew I wouldn't have time to read it all to you. But I want you to see it from the kind of 30,000 foot viewpoint. So we can get an overview of what's going on.

And then you can kind of bring it down and see what's going on with each individual. David is preparing the people to worship after his departure. It tells us the very beginning in verse 23.

Now, when David had reached his old age, he made Solomon king. These are the very last things that David does as king. As he establishes this rule and this order and all these ranks and all these people.

And he's preparing the nation to go into a time of worship. And he is setting the people apart because the temple without worship really is nothing. And the nation is called to worship the Lord God.

[13 : 48] So he wants to ensure they can do it. So I want you to see three things tonight and then we'll get into the business. Number one, we notice that there is order here. I know I didn't seem it the way I have to read it. But if you look at it, there is order.

It tells us that he orders the Levites according to the lineage and their genealogy. God is not a God of confusion. He is a God of order.

God had declared who it was that was to serve his people all the way back in the Exodus event. That the tribe of Levi was established and set aside as being those who labored to serve as priests.

But only the descendants of Aaron were to serve as priests. But the rest of the Levites were to do certain things. You remember back in Exodus, there were some that were to carry this. There were some that were to keep these utensils.

There were some that were to bear the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders. There were some. Well, those things are changing. No longer is the worship of God going to be moving from place to place. We're moving from tabernacle to temple.

[14 : 49] So there's going to be a set place. But that doesn't mean that there's not an established order. And what we notice is David orders everything to the last detail.

Because he's not allowing worship to be something that is subjective, right? He's rather allowing it where people are free to do what God had called them to do.

That is to worship him and to come before him. And to not be distracted by anything else. Because everything is working properly and orderly. Now, I'm not a very organized person.

But I appreciate the order and the reality of what God is doing through David here. So much so that now a number of years after the Babylonian captivity.

So we're far removed from when David did this, right? We're hundreds of years away from that. Now we come to this point where they know how to establish. And they can reestablish this worship.

[15 : 48] They can reintroduce this because David being moved by the hand of God. We'll see that in the 28th chapter. He tells us that he was given in writing the instructions for the temple.

So we'll see that probably Sunday night. But prior to him giving, like, this is what the building looks like. He gives them, this is what the people look like. And he establishes it so that worship is not hindered by chaos.

And he ensures that everybody that is supposed to be serving is serving. God has set this world in perfect order so that it testifies to who he is.

And David establishes clearly the order of what it is supposed to look like. In the tabernacle, there was no need for gatekeepers for there were no gates. Now we have gates.

In the tabernacle, there was no need for someone to watch out for storehouses for we had no storehouses. There was not a single place that people could bring the spoils and the goods and all this. Now we have that, right? Things are changing, but they're not just going to be left up to someone's opinion as to how it ought to be done.

[16 : 57] God is moving the individual, that is David at this time, to establish the order so that the people, not just the Levites, but the nation, is not hindered in their worship.

It was to flow smoothly. It was to operate the way it should operate. If we read the history of the nation of Israel, what we notice is when the Levites began abandoning their positions, then all of a sudden the worship began to deteriorate.

Most of the time, the reason the Levites were abandoning their position is because the people weren't bringing what they were responsible to bring to the temple. They weren't bringing their tithes.

They weren't bringing their offerings. They weren't bringing the things that were to sustain those who were working there and laboring there. And so the order gets disrupted, and when the order gets disrupted, worship is neglected.

We don't worship God in chaos. He is our rock in chaos because he is the one thing that is unmoved, or as Peter would say, he is the unshakable.

[18 : 02] When all that can be shaken is shaken, the one thing that endures is that which cannot be shaken, and we understand it is God that cannot be shaken. So what we notice here is to prepare the people to worship, David establishes an order.

With that order comes the second thing, which is opportunity. And this is probably one of the most amazing things that we notice here, is that there is opportunity given. Now, if you are the tribe of Levi, you knew that you are a set-apart person, right?

The tribe of Levi, their inheritance was the Lord God. But the Levites multiplied and multiplied just like everybody else. But only the descendants of Aaron within the tribe of Levi were to serve as priests.

And all of a sudden, if your job was to be the one who would go in and take the covering of the tabernacle down, and to cover and fold it up and to carry that, when the tabernacle was no longer there, you no longer have the opportunity to be of service.

But what David does is he takes the division, being moved of the Lord, of the Levites, and he gives opportunity. The reason these names are so important is because these names are reflective of individuals.

[19 : 11] And every individual is given the opportunity to serve. In a couple of passages throughout this text, you'll read, From the greatest to the smallest.

From the greatest to the smallest. Which means if your family was a small family within the tribe of Levi, you were still given the opportunity because they were counted in.

And they were not just given the opportunity to serve and to work and to be a gatekeeper. They were given the opportunity to do that which they were gifted for. So when we read, it says, These people who had charge of the outside work, there was an investigation done into one of those families.

And there were some outstanding men in that family. And they were given the opportunity to serve the Lord in their giftedness. When we read of the singers of Heman and Jadethon, which some people think is another rendition of the name Ethan, that we find elsewhere in scripture, you have Heman and Jadethon and those descendants of that one family.

We read a little bit into the text. We see that Heman had 14 sons and like three daughters. God blessed him with that. Well, if you know anything about Heman, you know that he is one who is skilled in musical instruments.

[20 : 26] And he is one that can teach other people to sing. And he is a part of that family of Levi. And now he is given the opportunity. Not only just to lead in his family, but he leads a multitude of a whole division, that their whole job description is to play these musical instruments and to sing.

And what we notice is not only is from the greatest to the smallest given the opportunity to come and to serve the Lord God and to establish an opportunity and a chance for people to worship, but we notice that the people are given the opportunity to do it as God has gifted them.

Not everyone is doing the same thing. But when we read the text in a little bit more detail, if we had the opportunity to kind of break it down there, what you will notice is that what is being provided is that they would serve in their, what we say, giftedness.

The way God made them, the way God wired them. So none are left out from smallest to greatest. But no gifts are overlooked either. We have the counting and the numbering of them.

Those that can play instruments, those that can sing, those that can watch gates, those that are good with outside administration, those that can watch the cattle in the valley, and those that can watch the cattle on the hilltops, right?

[21 : 44] Those who are good with the keepers of the soil. I mean, it's amazing to me the details of everything that is given. And what we find is that God longs to use people as he made them for his glory.

I mean, the only thing that we know of, Heman, Judoth, and a number of other people, is that they did this one thing, right? And they did it for the Lord God, and they did it to his glory.

And in this ordering, we ensure that there's an opportunity. And not only, and you say, well, what difference does that matter? Well, let's fast forward until the application really comes to us.

The opportunity is there. This division of priests that serve in the temple, which we did not read each family, that familial division of this one serves in this month, this one serves in this month, this one serves in this month, that continued all the way up until the time of Christ.

As a matter of fact, it continued until the destruction of the temple in AD 70. But it has application to us because if it was not for that order, then the opportunity would not have been given for Zechariah to be going into the temple to burn incense when the angel of the Lord stood before him and declared the coming of John the Baptist.

[23 : 05] So the announcement of the Messiah Zechariah is based upon the orders and opportunities laid out here.

God moved and that rotation continued until Zechariah, who was married to Elizabeth, was standing in the temple burning incense six months prior to the angel showing up to Mary.

And God is redeeming that time. Now, the amazing thing about that is even though it was Zechariah's family's time, Zechariah per se wasn't guaranteed the opportunity to serve in the temple.

But he was drawn by a lot, so God is also, man draws a lot, but God determines the will, right? So God put him there, we understand that. But if you take it just a little bit further, since the tribe of Levi was so large, especially by that time, if you had the opportunity to go burn incense in the temple, that was a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

You never got to do it again. So when Zechariah did it, it was at the right time, the right place. And we can trace that rotation all the way back here.

[24 : 20] If David had not been moved of the Lord to write that down, and it was not recorded, because it was recorded prior to the writing of Chronicles, because it was written after this, if it had not been recorded, if it had not come from the throne of the king, then the chronicler, looking throughout the history of God's people, would not have written it down.

And I told you, 1 and 2 Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. So that's the thing that keeps going on for the next 400 years, 400 plus years of intertestament time, until Zechariah's there, and God breaks the silence.

What are they doing? Just maintaining the order. This month, this family tribe. This month, this month. God had the opportunity, because they were still doing what he declared they should do.

When given the opportunity, God moves in those things. So there's order, there's opportunity. And the last one here we notice, well, what's the outcome? Why are we doing this?

What does it matter? And I think there's this one telling statement that we find. It seems kind of odd when we read it in our text, because it doesn't seem to, it doesn't seem to fit our wording there.

[25 : 31] In chapter 25, verse 1 says, Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and Haman and Judath. And who were, here's the word, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals.

They were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals. You say, well, how do you prophesy with a harp or a flute? Well, prophecy in Scripture does not always mean foretelling or future telling.

There are some portions of Scripture that are foretelling. But most prophecy in Scripture is foretelling. That's a big difference. To foretell something is to tell of future events that are coming.

We find those in Scripture, sure. We find a number of them that have what we call dual fulfillments in Old Testament prophetic word. That there was immediate fulfillment and then there was a latter one that's realized fully in Jesus Christ.

We understand that. But it is not always of telling of the future. Prophecy in Scripture most times, or I don't want to say most times, oftentimes, is foretelling.

[26 : 41] That is to tell forth, to declare the word of God. And you can do that through musical instruments. You can declare, because to declare the word of God is to declare the greatness of God and to declare the praise of God.

That is to foretell about the Lord God Almighty. So the musicians and the singers and the gatekeepers and the storehouse keepers and the priests and those who were taking care of all the weights and measurements and those who were ensuring that the unleavened bread was there and those who were doing all the meticulous detail were foretelling the glory of God by doing their work.

In New Testament, we would say, do all that you do as to the glory of the Lord and not unto man. They were to tell forth the praise and the glory of God by fulfilling what they were entrusted with.

The harps and the lyres and the flutes and the musical instruments and the singers, they were to declare that praise. Why? Who were they declaring it to?

One another? No. We titled this A People Prepared to Worship. They were declaring it to those who were coming to worship.

[28 : 03] It was preparing the nation to be able to worship. Bring the application here. It is a lot easier to worship.

When you know you're entering a space where things are being done as they should be done, we call that trustworthiness, where there are no distractions because things are moving smooth, where you can rely upon this one and that one and this one and that one and your focus isn't pulled away from everything else.

See, what God was doing is He was ensuring that around the temple that there would be no distractions. Everything was taken care of. Why?

Because He's the center of attention. Right? He's the focus of it. The gates are secure, the storehouses are kept, the measurements are perfect, the priests are making the sacrifices.

Everybody's doing what they're supposed to do. And the outcome is that the nation stands at the best opportunity to be able to worship.

[29 : 17] Is it perfectionism? No. But it's God using the people as they're gifted and as they're fitted to make sure that the nation is able to worship.

That there's no distractions. There's nothing that's failing but that God is the focus of it. And this is preparing them to worship because David is going to declare in the very next chapter.

Now these all go together. We didn't get into chapter 28 tonight because it is one we can slow down in just a little bit. this is going to be one of those things that he hands them and he says here's this here's the construction list here's the plans really what's going to happen by the time David dies the nation is without excuse to be able to worship because everything is there.

Now they don't. We know that. We've already read 1 and 2 Kings right? But they are without excuse. It's not because God has been hard to find because all the preparations have been laid out through David at the end of his life because he knows through personal experience all too well what happens when man chooses for himself how he ought to do things.

And God's redeeming that and now using him to prepare the people to be able to worship. And we see that really quickly passing over 1 Chronicles chapter 23 to chapter 27.

[30 : 53] Okay. Okay.