

April 15 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 1-3

SUMMARY

What is a chronicle? According to the American Heritage Dictionary, it is a detailed narrative record or report. Boy, does it have details!

1 & 2 Chronicles is an account of Israel's history and her kings from a priest's point of view. It's more than an administrative take on Israel's history. You'll see it's a spiritual assessment as we cruise through it. There are many details a priest would appreciate more than a king. Many people think Ezra the scribe (book of Ezra) wrote the account. The author is interested in preserving information about the temple and its services. This approach makes sense since a returning priest/scribe is about to rebuild the Temple the Babylonians destroyed seventy years earlier and restart Yehovah's Temple worship. The strong case for Ezra's authorship is the last few verses of Chronicles, the first few verses at the beginning of Ezra, but we don't know for sure who the author is.

We can be sure because the author is very interested in preserving family lines. Why? Because the books were written post-Babylonian exile. The author keeps records for the priesthood – who can serve and who can't, who can be High Priest and who can't. The family lists are similar to a title deed to family lands and history.

In a sense, Chronicles is an identity book. It maintains the Israelites' identity through the exile and after their return. Many returnees could trace their line back to a specific tribe after seventy years in the Babylonian exile. However, the people of Israel began to be referred to as Jews since most returnees were from Judah's southern kingdom and tribe.

Like 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles was probably a single scroll that was separated to make it easier to read and handle. It's a history from Adam through the post-exile, and it's great to read it along with Nehemiah and Ezra as one long history book. Yes, the entire Bible should be mandatory reading for every Christian, but the Kings and Chronicles histories are valuable with many lessons to learn. Chronicles will cover much of the same material as Kings, but often with fascinating details. Think of Kings as the play-by-play and Chronicles as the color commentary.

Although reading through the genealogies might get tedious, there are gems in them. The real fun comes when we read details about the kings that are plot twists, such as King Manasseh's life. Just wait, and you'll see.

I like what the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible says about Chronicles' main points. Look for these as you read through: "The important ideas that 1 and 2 Chronicles emphasize are: 1) a direct connection to God's people in the past; 2) the continuity of the line of David on the throne of Judah; 3) the centrality of the temple and its rituals in focusing on God; 4) the importance of music in worshipping God; 5) the invincibility of God's people when they obey him; and 6) the inevitability of punishment when God's people disobey him." The introduction also points out some key themes, including God's control of history, God's covenant with David, how God is to be appropriately worshiped, and a focus on God's house. (HCSB, Study Bible, Homan Bible Publishers, p. 648-649) So let's begin our *Cruisin' Through The Bible* with 1 Chronicles 1-3.

Chapter 1 opens with a firm connecting line stretching from Adam to Abraham. Many of the names along the line will be familiar to you if you remember the table of nations in Genesis 10. Nimrod was the first to become a great warrior on earth (1:10). Some scholars believe that the root of the world's empires begins with Nimrod, "Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the Lord. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the Lord." His kingdom started with Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah" (Genesis 10:8-12). Think about this. The Chronicler wrote about this just after Israel's Exile in Babylon, a city and empire whose founder was Nimrod.

Humanity starts with one man and expands outward into the world's many nations, created when God split humanity into language groups at the tower of Babel. As we read through the list, the focus narrows down to Abraham as God sets about creating a whole new family/nation of people from one old couple in a miraculous way (1:1-27).

The following list is Abraham's sons down to Jacob/Israel.

The following list is Jacob's brother Esau/Edom.

Chapter 2 shifts from Esau's lineage to Jacob's/Israel's lineage to follow the covenant line as Yehovah promised (Genesis 17:19; 35:11-12). This register of sons is one every Christian should know and memorize – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. As you read various names, some of the famous stories from earlier accounts should come back to you, such as Tamar (2:4, Genesis 38), Achar (aka Achan, Joshua 7), Boaz (with Ruth, Ruth 2-4), David (2:15, 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 1), and Caleb (2:18, Numbers 13; Joshua 14-15).

Chapter 3 narrows the spotlight to David's family line. Again we see some very familiar names, Amnon (2 Samuel 13), Absalom (2 Samuel 13-18), Abigail of Carmel (1 Samuel 25), Solomon (1 Kings 1-11), Bath-Shua (aka Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11-12), and Tamar (2 Samuel 13).

Next comes the line of Judah's kings through David (3:10-16, to be detailed in 2 Chronicles), followed by David's family line through the exile and afterward (3:17-24), even though there was no king during that time. I want to point out the name of Zerubbabel, the man who returned to Judah after the exile (3:19). Although he could have been Judah's king, under the Medo-Persian decree, he became the Jewish leader (governor) who helped direct the Temple's rebuilding, as we'll see in Ezra 2-5; Nehemiah 7, 12; Haggai 1-2, and Zechariah 4).

INSIGHT

God is interested in details. While the Jews took great efforts to document the plethora of names, our Lord takes even greater pains to do so. I say that because it was Jesus' pain and struggle that writes our name into His chronicle of His kingdom when we come to Him, and our name must be written in the right book. "And anyone whose *name was not found written in the book of life* was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). Has your name been recorded in the Book of Life? If you're not sure, commit yourself to Jesus and follow Him for the rest of your life. If you know your name is in His Book of Life, rejoice and pray for others to be inscribed as well!

April 16 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 4-6

SUMMARY

And look! *More* names and descendants! Since we're *Cruisin' Through The Bible*, I'll again point out the markers and general terrain as we go by. As the next step after this one-year read-through, I recommend getting a good study Bible with lots of notes and commentary at the bottom of each page, plus an introduction for each book. Start again with the same reading plan, and read the information about the verses you read. It's not that much more time and will be invaluable to you as you become more familiar with God's wonderful word!

So, what do we have here in chapter 4? In the previous readings, we traced the lineages from Adam to Abraham to Jacob to his sons to David and his royal offspring and family members. Now we backtrack to look at the family genealogies by tribe and clans. The first is Judah because the tribe's namesake, Judah, became the leader of the whole family by kingship. Going through the verses, I laugh at some of the names. What daughter would not seriously consider throttling her dad for naming her "Hazzelepioni" (4:3)? Imagine all the grief she would get when her classmates tediously called her "My Little Pony?" There would need to be some severe counseling because of that!

Another name that pops out is Othniel, son of Kenaz, brother to Caleb (4:13; Joshua 15). Othniel was Israel's first judge (Judges 3). One last name in this chapter is Jether. Yes, he has some significance as the father of Amasa, King David's general (1 Kings 2:5, 32). But why it sticks out to me is a good friend's southern father was named Jether, and I thought it was fantastic. It's amazing how many Hebrew scripture names were used across the United States in the 1700-the 1800s. Zebulon Montgomery Pike was a famous American brigadier general and explorer for whom Pikes Peak in Colorado was named. There, that'll win you some money on Jeopardy! Oh, and I almost missed it. There's another Gentile tucked into Judah's line. Bithiah was one of Pharaoh's daughters (4:17-18).

Now we launch into Simeon's tribe and clans. Because Simeon participated in the city of Shechem slaughter (Genesis 34), his father, Jacob, prophesied his intermingling with the tribe of Judah. When the tribes received their portion, the tribe of Simeon was within Judah's boundaries. We don't hear much from the tribe of Simeon other than a couple of notes. 1) They're documented up to King Hezekiah's day (4:41), and 2) the Simeonites went on a raid and wiped out the remaining Amalekites who were hunkering down at Mount Seir in Edom's territory (4:42-43).

In chapter 5, we shift to Israel's former firstborn, the tribe of Reuben. Here's a crucial piece of information. "These were the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. He was the firstborn, but his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, because Reuben defiled his father's bed. He is not listed in the genealogy according to birthright. Although Judah became strong among his brothers and a ruler came from him, the birthright was given to Joseph" (5:1-2). Why is this important? Because in the ancient world, the firstborn took on the responsibility and leadership of the family when the father died. To help the firstborn carry out his duties, a double portion of dad's estate is given to him to support mom until she dies and helps any unmarried sisters until they marry or die. If you remember, Reuben was "demoted" from the position when he tried to "pre-claim" his firstborn status by sleeping with one of his father's concubines (Genesis 35:22). Jacob removes his firstborn status (as first wife Leah's first son), and it transfers to Joseph (as the second wife Rachel's first son). Removing Reuben is why Israel "adopts" Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, into the family (Genesis), and Joseph (the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) receive *two* large portions of land in Canaan. Got it? But Joseph's line doesn't produce the royal family. That was prophesied for Judah (Genesis 49:10), and so it was.

The next significant incident jumps to when the king of Assyria starts to invade Israel around 724 B.C. He takes Reuben's leader (Beerah) captive and exiles the Reubenites (5:6). Assyria exiled them far to the east across the Fertile Crescent.

The following tribes are the half-tribe of Manasseh and Gad. These two groups settled with Reuben on the east side of the Jordan River, so it makes sense for the Chronicler to address them together. The tribe of Gad joined forces with the Reubenites and Manasseh-ites to become a formidable army. But the Chronicler clarifies *why* they were successful, "They received help against these enemies because they cried out to God in battle, and the Hagarites and all their allies were handed over to them. He was receptive to their prayer because they trusted in him" (5:20). It wasn't in their strength but Yehovah's strength that won them their victories. Here is a prime example of the author's priestly bent – a focus on God, not man.

Even though the half-tribe of Manasseh had produced many warriors, the king of Assyria conquered them and exiled them far to the east as well (5:26). It's from these verses that some have asserted that the Bnai Menashe clan living in India are descendants of these exiles.

And now we reach a *very* long chapter. Chapter 6 makes an account of the Levites and their duties. The Chronicler wrote this extensive list to ensure that the priesthood family

lines were maintained after the exile to reestablish Temple worship. Therefore we start with the High Priest Aaron (6:1) and move down the line to the High Priest of the Babylonian Exile, Jehozadak (6:15). After that, the genealogy splits along Levi's three son's lines (Gershon, Kohath, Merari, 6:16). A few names of note are Korah (6:22), Elkanah (the prophet/priest/judge Samuel's father), and Samuel himself (6:27-28).

We now reach a fascinating part – the Levite musicians (6:31-47)! Remember these names for the future; Heman (6:33), his relative and “right-hand man,” Asaph (6:39), and Ethan, Heman's “left-hand” man (6:44). These guys and their descendants will head up the Levitical worship team in David's Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. When we reach the Psalms, you'll see some of their worship songs (psalms) included. Be sure to read each Psalm's heading to see who wrote a particular one.

Then comes a very tight list of Aaron and his sons who served as High Priest (6:48-53).

The remainder of the chapter documents the land given to the Levites for places to reside. They didn't own any of the lands. They just lived in those cities and areas. Some of those cities were the famous Cities of Refuge, where an accused criminal could flee, stand trial, determine innocence or guilt, and live for a time so that a family's Avenger of Blood couldn't kill them out of rage and revenge. When a priestly family line's time came to do their duty in the Temple (usually twice a year on the regular rotation and a whole week during the three Pilgrim Feasts of the Lord – Passover, Shavuot, and Tabernacles, five weeks), they would leave home to serve, then return. And we are done for the day!

INSIGHT

What a fantastic list of Levites, and it isn't just the key players who are recorded by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for posterity. A few of the names are famous, and most are not. Today, there are a few “famous names” in Jesus' church. Some of them have popular ministries and wield quite a bit of influence. Many are local church leaders, Christian educators, missionaries, and parachurch leaders. But a vast majority of those who serve Jesus are known by relatively few who know what they do for Jesus in their congregation or community. But Jesus knows. He knows you by name, and He records your works. One day you will have your day before the King, and Jesus will publicly recognize you for your efforts for His sake. Don't be discouraged. No matter how “insignificant” you think your work is (*just* a church musician or a gatekeeper/usher), you are known, recognized, and recorded forever.

April 17 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 7-10

SUMMARY

Oy gevalt! More tribal genealogies! Oh well, let's jump in.

Chapter 8 covers seven tribes; Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, the half-tribe of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher. It's interesting to note how many warriors came from Issachar's tribe – 58,600 brave men among a tribal total of 87,000.

As for Benjamin, they fielded 59,434 warriors.

Naphtali's genealogy is one verse, and I wondered why so I checked with my study Bible. It says, "Naphtali is mentioned in only one short verse. Apparently, his genealogy was not important in the Chroniclers' day because after the exile there seems to be no large contingent from Naphtali among those who returned to Judah (see 9:3)" (HCSB). That could be since many of the northern Israelites were taken away by the Assyrians, with a small contingent escaping south to live in Judah before Babylon exiled it.

As for Manasseh, there are a few connections to notice. It mentions Zelophehad, who had only daughters, and these are the identical daughters mentioned in Numbers 26:29-34. Also, the name Gilead links the family to the "land of Gilead" (Gilead's land) on the east side of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Ephraim, Manasseh's "brother" tribe, was the big influencer of the Ten Tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. They were so prominent that the name "Ephraim" became interchangeable with "Israel" when referring to the northern kingdom, e.g., "Judah vs. Ephraim." After the national split, Ephraim became a significant competitor with Judah. The noticeable thing with this list is the number of well-known towns under Ephraim's rule – Bethel, Gezer, Shechem, Beth-Shean, and Meggido. Ephraimite territory was in the center of Israel.

And then we come to Asher's offspring. One of the most prominent of Asher's descendants is not even on this list but is found in Luke's Gospel – Anna, the elderly prophetess (Luke 2:36-38). She was one of the few who saw early on (when Jesus was just eight days old!) that the infant Jesus was Yehovah's consolation for Israel, and he was their Messiah.

Chapter 9 begins with the end of the Babylonian exile. "The first to live in their towns on their own property again were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants" (9:2).

Since tribal family lines were crucial for land ownership and priestly/royal functions, accurate records were kept for the nation to reestablish upon the peoples' return. The first section of the list refers to Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Not everyone from the northern kingdom was lost. As you'll soon read, some left the idolatrous kingdom led by Jeroboam I and returned to Judah. However, the list is mainly about the Jews from Judah and some from Benjamin (9:4, 7).

This next list is most important! The Chronicler accurately kept records through the exile so the priests, Levites, and gatekeepers could return to work as soon as possible (9:10-13, 14-16, 17-21). Since the rebuilt temple wasn't as magnificent as Solomon's edifice and was without a courtyard, the four entrances had to be guarded by gatekeepers who served in week-long shifts (9:24-25). Out of this same crew of priests and Levites were those selected to oversee utensils, supplies, service preparations, and ministering in music (singers) (9:28-34).

Curiously, we come to a list of King Saul's family line. Why? Because it ties the tribal genealogies to the historical events of Israel's kings beginning in chapter 10. Of particular note is 9:39, "Ner fathered Kish, Kish fathered Saul, and Saul fathered Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal." If you've been *Cruisin' Through The Bible* with me through 1 & 2 Samuel, these names should be very familiar.

Chapter 10 picks up in the same place as 1 Samuel 31 – Saul and his sons' deaths on Mount Gilboa during the Philistine campaign against Israel, the same campaign from which David was dismissed because most of the Philistine leaders saw him as a threat. So as not to repeat myself, check out the entry for 1 Samuel 31 on the March 22 reading. But here, however, is an ironic new piece of information. The Philistines stripped Saul of his armor before they dismembered his corpse. This armor could have been the same armor King Saul offered to young David before the shepherd boy brought down the Philistines' champion, Goliath, but that was many years before. Regardless, the Philistines used Saul's body parts to confirm his defeat and his armor and skull to give credit for the win to their gods (10:10). Finally, we have a priestly assessment of Saul and why he was defeated. "Saul died for his unfaithfulness to the Lord because he did not keep the Lord's word. He even consulted a medium for guidance, but he did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse" (10:13-14). To the Chronicler, the essence of his downfall was not a royal or military reason but a spiritual one. You'll be seeing a lot more of this.

INSIGHT

Again, I'm struck that the Lord remembers those who have the most menial jobs – utensil

bearers, mixing spices for the incense, baking bread? And yet, without these, Yehovah's worship would stop. Do you think you're insignificant because you clean the church bathrooms, cut grass, deliver food to your congregation's needy, lead a home group, or pray for someone in need in your community? Forget it. Without you, God's worship through you would stop. Paul says it best, "*And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Colossians 3:17).

April 18 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 11-14

SUMMARY

Chapter 11 jumps right to David's coronation.

Then how King David captured Jebus, the Jebusite citadel, the last remaining stronghold, by Joab and crew sneaking up a water shaft that accessed water far underground. You can still see it today!

David's Mighty Thirty. First, the list implies only thirty, but there were 45 per the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Why? Because the list accounts for many of David's elite troops over his time as king. They performed mighty exploits, and David had a deep respect for the men who served him.

Chapter 12 returns to David's life at Ziklag, just before King Saul died. Here we get new information. The Benjaminites who rallied to David could use their right or left hand in warfare and included the names of the warriors that 1 Samuel 30 didn't give us. It wasn't just some Benjaminites, but some Gadites joined David. "These Gadites were army commanders; the least of them was a match for a hundred, and the greatest of them for a thousand" and who forded the Jordan during the high watermark in the spring to clear the area (12:14-15).

A group of Benjaminites, led by Amasai, defected to David. When asked if they were committed to David or trying to betray him, something unique happens – the Holy Spirit "envelopes" Amasai as he declares their allegiance to the Spirit-anointed David. Men from Manasseh also defected to David (12:19).

We get some new information regarding David's early seven-year reign from Hebron. He's joined by defecting troops from all the tribes, including priests and Levites, and King David received them and their abundance of provisions.

Now 1 Chronicles 13 skips over 2 Samuel 1-6 right to David's Ark Transportation Debacle. Again, it makes sense since the author is concerned about spiritual matters. He mentions that the Ark had been sitting at Kiriath-jearim because "we did not inquire of him in Saul's days" (13:3). This statement is the writer's little slap at King Saul's reign as not caring much about Yehovah. But King David does! He wants to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. So, he assembles his priestly transport team, *but they go about it all wrong!* The Ark wasn't supposed to be transported on a new cart, but with its poles held on the shoulders of the priests. Despite the blaring worship music (which 2 Samuel doesn't point

out), the Lord smites Uzzah after the cart nearly topples, and he reaches out to steady the Ark. David diverts the Ark to Obed-edom's home until he figures out what went wrong. The last verse, 13:14, tells us why David wanted the Ark. Where the presence of the Lord rested, there His blessing resided. The Lord hugely blessed Obed-edom and his family for the three months the Lord lived with his family.

Chapter 14 highlights the Lord's favor upon David. First, Hiram of Tyre blesses David with all the men and materials he needs to build his palace. Second, the Lord blesses David with many children through his growing harem of wives. And finally, the writer shows us how the Lord gives victories to David via power and unique strategies. King David had held the Philistines in check, but now as Israel's new king, the coastal trouble-makers launched a campaign to test the new king before he became established. King David thrashes them both times with the Lord's help. The Chronicler makes a clear comparison between King David and his predecessor, King Saul. Saul did not wait for the Lord's word before he acted, and then when the Lord no longer answered him, Saul sought help from the spirit world by raising Samuel's spirit from the dead. But David sought the Lord both times with success.

INSIGHT

Yehovah richly blessed David because the king had a heart for God. Does that mean if we have a heart for God, the Lord will always shower us with good things and favor with people? No. Sorry to bring you down a bit. Following the Lord doesn't guarantee material prosperity or favor. Quite the opposite. Lest we're tempted to think life with Jesus is all sunshine and roses and blessings galore, Jesus tells us that we'll likely have to endure suffering, deprivation, persecution, and even personal attacks. We need to consider that and prepare for it.

But on the other hand, when we walk with the Lord, we can be assured He loves us, will care for us, comfort us, and, yes, even prosper us as He sees fit. So there's a balance. Let's appreciate the good things that come our way with thankfulness to the Lord and appreciate the not-so-good things as opportunities to show our trust and devotion to the One who gave all for us.

April 19 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 15-17

SUMMARY

After the Ark Transportation Debacles, King David finally figures out what went wrong. “No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever” (15:2). Gee, I wonder where he learned that? Oh yeah! It’s in God’s Torah. As Israel’s king is supposed to do, he probably read through his personal hand-written Torah scroll (Deuteronomy 17:18) and came across the instructions (Exodus 25:14; Numbers 4:15). “The Lord our God burst out in anger against us because you Levites were not with us the first time, for we didn’t inquire of him about the proper procedures” (15:13). The Chronicler records many priests and Levites that David assembles to carry the Ark to his specially-prepared tent in Jerusalem. As a reminder, the priesthood set up the Tabernacles in Gibeon, where they performed the sacrificial service. Meanwhile, the core component – the Ark of the Covenant – rested in David’s tent, where the priests worshipped the Lord in song and with musical instruments.

When we read about the Ark procession, it’s *very* different than the account in 2 Samuel 6. That account focuses on David sacrificing animals and dancing before the Lord. This account highlights the spiritual leaders overseeing the procession, and there are a lot of details about the music. Remember when I pointed out the names Heman, Asaph, and Ethan? Well, here they are, leading the music and playing bronze cymbals (15:17, 19). Harps, lyres, and shofarim accompany the singers (15:16, 20-21, 24). They even had a worship leader, Chenaniah, “the leader of the Levites in music, was to direct the music because he was skillful” (15:22). How’s that for a worship team? Yes, music had been used previously to worship Yehovah, but David now makes it a central part of their worship of Yehovah.

As in the 2 Samuel account, David sacrifices animals, and the parade is loud. David is dancing his heart out with joy while wearing a linen robe, the garments of a priest (15:27). It’s not exactly the royal robes a dignified king should wear, or so David’s wife Michal thinks, and she despises what he does (15:29).

Chapter 16 continues with the Ark celebration as the Lord’s presence “comes to town!” The priests place it in David’s Tabernacle (Tent). King David offers burnt offerings (whole, completely consumed animal sacrifices) and fellowship offerings (for the Lord, the priests, himself, and anyone else to enjoy). When the celebration wraps up, King David blesses God’s people and gives them food gifts as a token of the day’s festivities (16:1-3). Does the worship service end there? Nope. David appoints “some of the Levites

to be ministers before the ark of the Lord, to celebrate the Lord God of Israel, and to give thanks and praise to him" (16:4). This assignment means that the Lord's worship team continually played next to King David's palace, day and night. Do you doubt me? Check this out, "Now bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who stand in the Lord's house at night!" (Psalm 134:1).

The Ark, though important, is not Israel's center of worship. That was the Tabernacle at Gibeon. However, the king and his people celebrated and worshiped the Lord with all their hearts and made Yehovah the center of the Israelite people.

With everything in place and operating, King David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, writes a dedicatory psalm of thanksgiving to His God. Verse 7 says David "decreed for the first time that thanks be given to the Lord by Asaph and his relatives" (16:7). Here is a summary of the Psalm to help you appreciate how it divides into topics and themes:

(16:8-13) *This is David's call to praise.* It calls the listeners and worshippers to turn their minds and hearts toward God. Look at the words David uses – "Give thanks to the Lord," "Sing to Him," "Boast in His holy name," "Seek the Lord," and "Remember the wondrous works He has done."

(16:14--22) *David recounts God's covenant* with His people and how He kept all of His promises to them, especially by bringing them into their covenant land.

(16:23-24) *David commands the Lord's people to sing His praises* among the nations so that they will learn of Yehovah.

(16:25-27) *David gives the reason why the Lord's praise should be sung* among the nations – because He is the only God and the rest are only idols.

(16:28-30a) *David tells the people to acknowledge and ascribe* (to attribute or assign a quality to something) glory, strength, and holiness to Yehovah.

(16:30b-33) *David declares all creation praises Yehovah.*

(16:34-36) *David sings that Yehovah should be praised for His salvation.*

The final part of chapter 16 summarizes all that David has done to establish worship for Yehovah at Gibeon and in Jerusalem. Again, these are not details a king would be interested in (except for David). We don't find these descriptions in 1 & 2 Kings. But the Chronicler is a priest, and he notes David's devotion to the Lord!

Chapter 17 mirrors 2 Samuel 7:1, Yehovah's covenant with King David. "You will not build Me a house. My house, for now, is the Tent. And have I ever asked anyone to build Me a house? No. But I called you and made you a successful king over my people. I have given them a secure place to live. And rather than *you* building *Me* a house, *I'm* going to build *you* a house (a pun re: family). Your descendant will build Me a house, and I will never remove My love from your descendants." What's King David's reaction to this incredible news? Why, prayer, of course! And what a humble prayer it is! "Who am I that you would do this for me? You promise me a lasting dynasty and call me a great man. What can I say? YOU did all this, not me. You are the great one, and so are Your people that You saved from Egypt. They are Your people, and You are their God. So, do what You promised. I accept it, and may You be exalted through it. May my family line that You have blessed be blessed indeed!"

INSIGHT

"When your time comes to be with your ancestors, I will raise up after you your descendant, who is 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 not remove my faithful love from him as I removed it from the one who was before you. I will appoint him over my house and my kingdom forever, and his throne will be established forever" (17:11-14).

But David doesn't have a son on the throne right now. Well, not yet. While this promise did happen in David's line from David to Zechariah, the Lord continued David's family line down to the epitome of this promise – Jesus. The Father has established Jesus' kingdom. We await its coming on earth even though Jesus now reigns within His people, His subjects. Since He is David's descendant, the Father's King-designate, and can never die again, His throne will be established forever, and Jesus will never be deposed. The Father's love will always remain with Jesus. Jesus is the Father's son forever. Yehovah's promise to King David finds its completion in Jesus, Israel's soon coming king!

April 20 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 18-21

SUMMARY

Wow, does the text ever clip along! David's coronation to Jerusalem's capture to David's D-Team (The Amazing Thirty) to David's supporters and soldiers to David and the Ark, then David's blessing and his covenant with God – I can hardly catch my breath.

King David's military successes against the Philistines, Moab, and King Hadadezer of Zobah extended David's influence north through Aram/Syria to the Euphrates River (map time!). "The Lord made David victorious wherever he went" (18:6).

Great plunder.

Solid alliances.

Abishai's victories over the Edomites (18:12).

Essential people in David's service:

- Joab was over the army.
- Jehoshaphat was the court historian.
- Zadok, son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, were priests.
- Shavsha was the court secretary.
- Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites (David's elite guards).
- David's sons were the chief officials at the king's side.

Chapter 19 begins with the infamous Hanun the Ammonite incident where King David tries to maintain a friendly alliance that he had going with his father, King Nahash. "Just because David has sent men with condolences for you, do you really believe he's showing respect for your father? Instead, haven't his emissaries come in order to scout out, overthrow, and spy on the land?" (19:3). Why did the Ammonite leaders give such counsel? Because they recognized that King David had grown very powerful and was expanding his kingdom in other directions. To be fair, it's a reasonable suspicion, don't you think? Perhaps. But it was a poor decision. Everyone knows you don't poke a king with Yehovah standing behind him. And the battle begins!

The Ammonites know they can't defeat David's army alone, so they send a ton of silver, actually "thirty-eight tons of silver," to hire armored vehicles and cavalry from Aram-

naharaim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah (19:6). Ammonite King Hanun also hires an army from Maacha's king (19:7). Boy, that'll stop David!

Or not.

Joab arrives with David's elite troops and realizes that the Aramean forces are behind him while the Ammonite forces are in front. In a gutsy move, Joab turns half of the army backward to face the Arameans with the caveat that whichever Israelite battlefront needs help, the other will turn to reinforce them. When Joab routs the Arameans, the Ammonites turn tail and flee into their fortified city (19:15). You'd think that would be the end of it – unless you already know the same account in 2 Samuel 10. The Arameans are ticked that they got spanked, so they hire a big gun, Commander Shophach of King Hadadezer's Aram army. The two forces line up, and David trounces them, taking out "seven hundred of their charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers" and Commander Shophach (19:18). The Arameans learn their lesson and sue for peace with Israel. They chose *wisely* (hat tip to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

Chapter 20 opens with a familiar refrain, "In the spring when kings march out to war." Why fight in the springtime? Because the winter rains are tapering off and the ground firms up (especially helpful for charioteers), and the temps are not too cold or too hot for the troops. Why did Joab lead the Israelite army against Ammon? Likely to finish what Ammon started the previous year with the insult to David's emissaries. What happened during the battle? "Joab led the army and destroyed the Ammonites' land. He came to Rabbah and besieged it." But, there's a "but." "But David remained in Jerusalem." Then the account jumps right to "Joab attacked Rabbah and demolished it" (20:1). Did you catch what's missing from the report? You win if you guessed "The David and Bathsheba adultery and murder scandal"! But why does the Chronicler leave that *schmutzy* story out of his account? It could be that since the Lord forgave King David after he repented and then blessed the couple with one of Israel's preeminent kings, Solomon, he left it for the Kings author to cover.

So, David and his army finally defeat Ammon, and King David takes the crown from their king and places it on his head as a sign of triumph and control (20:2). Did you see how much that crowned weighed? With all its gold, it weighed 75 pounds! I hope David had a good chiropractor in case he chose to wear it all the time.

And now, off to other battles! But this time, it's against the last of the Philistine giants, descendants of the Rephaim (Hebrew for "terrible ones"), a race of giant people presumed to be 7 to 10 feet tall. We're not surprised because there are multiple references

to gigantic people in the Canaan region, which many tribes had to eliminate. For example, according to Moses, King Og of Bashan's bed was 13 ½' x 6' (Deuteronomy 3:11). David's men set to work and dispatch Sippai, Lahmi, and a giant with six digits on his hands and feet (20:6). For the complete list of giants David's men killed, refer back to 2 Samuel 21.

In chapter 21, we get the account of David's "illegal" census of the people, likely out of pride, to see how big his fighting force was. There's an interesting difference between the 2 Samuel 21 record and this one in Chronicles. In 2 Samuel 21, it says, "The Lord's anger burned against Israel again, and he stirred up David against them to say, 'Go, count the people of Israel and Judah.'" This section starts with "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to count the people of Israel." Which is it? To square the circle, we could say, "the Lord worked a way to punish Israel (for some unstated reason) by allowing Satan to incite David into making an illegal census for Israelite kings were not allowed to do so except at the Lord's command." How's that?

Despite Joab's objection, he carried out the king's command. The number of available troops is staggering – In Israel, there were 1.1 million armed men with 470,000 in Judah alone, and that wasn't even counting the men from Benjamin or the Levites (21:5)! David realizes his sin, asks for forgiveness, and receives three options as we read about before – three years of famine, three months of devastation by an enemy, or three days under the Lord's direct judgment. David would rather be at Yehovah's mercy than a human enemy, so the Lord sends a plague upon Israel (21:14). When the destroying angel reaches Jerusalem, the Lord tells him to stop at the place of Ornan's threshing floor on Mount Moriah. David sees the angel over the city with a drawn sword, and he immediately, like a good shepherd, intercedes for his "sheep," the people of Israel.

It's fascinating to me that this all seems orchestrated by the Lord. No, He didn't lead Israel into the sin that caused Him to bring judgment against them. No, He didn't make David sin by forcing him to take a census. But the Lord used all those events to bring about something crucial to His plan of redemption – building the First Temple. As in 2 Samuel 24, the Lord commands David to build an altar to the Lord on Ornan the Jebusite's (aka Araunah's) threshing floor. In both accounts, David refuses to accept Ornan's threshing floor, wood, and oxen as a gift for David to use as a sacrifice to stop the plague, for "I will not take for the Lord what belongs to you or offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (21:24). David was the cause of the plague, so David will sacrifice according to the Lord's word to end it. When David set everything in place, he called on the Lord, and Yehovah sent down fire to ignite David's offering as a sign that it was acceptable. After this, "the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath" (21:27). Chapter 21 leaves us with the Tabernacle at Gibeon, which David is afraid to go to because of the

sword-sliding angel (21:30), David's Tabernacle next to his palace, which housed the Ark and the Levite worship team, and a sacrificial altar on the site of the future First Temple.

INSIGHT

David's exclamation, "I will not take for the Lord what belongs to you or offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (21:24), captures two essentials of true worship. We cannot offer someone else's worship in our place, and God's worship must come from us. Just like salvation, we can't ride in on someone else's relationship to God – not a parent, a pastor, a priest, or a friend. Our relationship with the Lord is always direct and personal and never by proxy. Also, true worship costs us something every time. Yes, we don't offer animals on an altar. Instead, we offer ourselves to the Lord "as living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) by "spending" our time, talent, treasure, and efforts on His behalf. True worship always costs us something.

April 21 : Scriptures 1 Chronicles 22-24

SUMMARY

And speaking of the First Temple, chapter 22 launches right into David's preparations for Yehovah's future worship center on a hilltop in Jerusalem. Because there were no chapter headings in the original, then David's hesitancy to go to Gibeon to sacrifice to the Lord because of the sword-wielding angel at the end of chapter 21 would flow right into chapter 22, verse 1, "Then David said, 'This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel.'" The whole event appears to be orchestrated by Yehovah to bring the Tabernacle from Gibeon to Jerusalem to be united with the Ark as the center of Israel's worship.

David recognizes that his son and future king, Solomon, is too young and inexperienced to get the massive project rolling. Therefore, the king makes preparations for him, knowing the Lord has promised Solomon will build the Temple (1 Chronicles 17:11-12). David marshalls the stone cutters and collects iron, bronze, and cedar for the work lavishly. Then David turns to Solomon and charges him with the Temple's construction. First, he tells Solomon that this building project is not on a whim and it's from the Lord Himself.

Furthermore, the Lord will ensure Solomon (whose name, *Shlomo*, means "peace," derived from the Hebrew, *shalom*) will have peace to build God's house of peace. Second, David gives Solomon a great piece of guidance that helps explain why Solomon asked for wisdom when he did. "Above all, may the Lord give you *insight and understanding* when he puts you in charge of Israel *so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God*" (22:12 italics author). Third, David tells Solomon of the materials and labor force he's set aside for the project. Finally, King David orders all his leaders to assist Solomon when the time comes for building the Temple, so Yehovah's worship comes together in Jerusalem, "Now determine in your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Get started building the Lord God's sanctuary so that you may bring the ark of the Lord's covenant and the holy articles of God to the temple that is to be built for the name of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 22:19).

Chapter 23 goes into classic Chronicler mode, focusing on the inner workings of the Levites – their organization and duties after vaulting over the entire 1 Kings account of Solomon's enthronement. Per the Torah, the Levites were to start serving at age 30, so it is here (23:2). The numbers are astounding! "38,000 Levites available for service, sir!" The group splits into Temple service workers, officers and judges, gatekeepers, and musicians. And again, we get a family genealogy to accurately track Levi's sons, Aaron's

descendants, and Moses' sons. According to the Torah, the Levites are counted at one month old (Numbers 3:15), registered for service at twenty (23:24), interned at twenty-five, set into active service at thirty, and retired at age fifty. But David makes a change. The Levites begin to serve at twenty since they don't have to move the Tabernacle anymore (23:26). The Levites are to assist the priestly line in the Tabernacle and Temple duties.

In chapter 24, David divides the Levites into twenty-four "courses" or divisions that will rotate in and out of Temple service (24:3). For example, the 1st course serves during the first week of the first month, Aviv (occurring in March/April). The 2nd course serves during the second week of Aviv. However, because Passover/Unleavened Bread occurs from Aviv 15-21 and all male Israelites must come to the Temple for worship during that week, *all* the Levite courses are required for duty. Then on the fourth week of Aviv, the 3rd course serves, and so on. Because of this, we know when John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, served in the Temple and met the angel Gabriel. Zechariah was of Abijah's course or division (Luke 1:5). This assignment means Zechariah's meet-up with Gabriel, who prophesied his son's birth, likely happened at the end of May or the beginning of June. Pretty interesting, eh? With the Three Pilgrim Feasts, where all the men of Israel gathered in Jerusalem (Passover, Shavuot, Tabernacles), each division would serve in the Temple five weeks out of the year. Otherwise, they would perform their priestly duties in their local towns and villages. Chapter 24 concludes by completing the Levitical family list.

INSIGHT

Here's a proposed time of Jesus' birth. Zechariah's meet-up with Gabriel, who prophesied his son's birth, likely happened at the end of May or the beginning of June. If (and this is a big *if*) Zechariah's wife (John the Baptist's mother) conceived John when Zechariah returned home (mid-June), and since John was six months older than his cousin Jesus, that means Mary conceived Jesus in mid-late December which could have been during Hanukkah, the Festival of Light (Jesus being the *Light of the World*, John 8:12, 9:5) and the Festival of Dedication. If Mary conceived in December, then Jesus was likely born in September, possibly during the Feast of Tabernacles, given the other clues in the Gospels. Just a theory.