

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 31

Hezekiah Organizes the Priests

Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, every man to his possession. 2 And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. 3 The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD. 4 And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD. 5 As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. 6 And the people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things that had been dedicated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps. 7 In the third month they began to pile up the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8 When Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. 9 And Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. 10 Azariah the chief priest, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have eaten and had enough and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this large amount left." 11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them. 12 And they faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the dedicated things. The chief officer in charge of them was Conaniah the Levite, with Shimei his brother as second, 13 while Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers assisting Conaniah and Shimei his brother, by the appointment of Hezekiah the king and Azariah the chief officer of the house of God. 14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, was over the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contribution reserved for the LORD and the most holy offerings. 15 Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were faithfully assisting him in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their brothers, old and young alike, by divisions, 16 except those enrolled by genealogy, males from three years old and upward—all who entered the house of the LORD as the duty of each day required—for their service according to their offices, by their divisions. 17 The enrollment of the priests was according to their fathers' houses; that of the Levites from twenty years old and upward was according to their offices, by their divisions. 18 They were enrolled with all their little children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, the whole assembly, for they were faithful in keeping themselves holy. 19 And for the sons of Aaron, the priests, who were in the fields of common land belonging to their cities, there were men in the several cities who were designated by name to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to everyone among the Levites who was enrolled. 20 Thus Hezekiah

did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. 21 And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

31:1–21 Apart from the first verse, which parallels 2Ki 18:4, the material of this chapter is unique to the Chronicler, whose interest in the Levites and the temple predominates. Hezekiah's efforts to ensure the material support of the Levites (v. 4) probably had relevance to the postexilic audience for whom the Chronicler wrote. (CSB)

Intimate relationship between faithful Hezekiah and the priesthood prompts the Chronicler to include this information about the king's provisions for the priesthood. (TLSB)

31:1 *the Israel ... Israel.* Lit. "all Israel ... all the Israelites." The Chronicler's interest in "all Israel" as united under Hezekiah is again apparent. (CSB)

Eradication of idolatry spread from the temple (29:3–19) to the city (30:14) and from Jerusalem to the outlying districts, even to cities of the Northern Kingdom, of which Ephraim and Manasseh were the representative tribes. (TLSB)

31:2 Echoes 8:14. The Chronicler continues to model Hezekiah as a "second Solomon." (CSB)

After Hezekiah rededicated the temple (29:20–30), he restored regular worship services, which had been suspended by his father (29:7). (TLSB)

divisions. Like David and Solomon, Hezekiah brought order to the priests and Levites by structuring them into divisions at the altar, as musicians and as gatekeepers (cf 1Ch 23–26; 2Ch 8:14). (TLSB)

gates of the camp. The temple courts were likely filled with tents or booths during the festivals of ch 30. The returning exiles of the Chronicler's day likewise would have camped when they first returned to the destroyed city of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

31:3 *contribution of the king.* The king's giving from his own wealth prompted a generous response from the people, as it had also under David (1Ch 29:3–9). (CSB)

Law. Legislation regarding sacrifices for various occasions is written in Nu 28–29. As David gave of his own possessions to endow the temple (1Ch 29:3–5), so does Hezekiah. Judah again attains regularity in divinely established worship practices (cf 13:11). (TLSB)

31:4–7 People of Judah, both in Jerusalem (v 4) and throughout the land (v 6), respond by bringing in their tithes (cf Dt 12:5–19; 14:22–27). (TLSB)

31:4 *portion due to the priests.* Cf Nu 18. (TLSB)

give themselves to the Law. By restoring the offerings, the priests would be able to return to full-time service at the temple. (TLSB)

31:5–6 See Dt 12:5–19; 14:22–27. The grain, new wine and oil had to be brought to the temple (Dt 12:17). Those coming from a distance, however, could bring the value of their offerings and purchase them on arrival (Dt 14:24). Only those who actually lived in Judah brought the tithe of their herds and flocks, a difficult procedure for those who lived farther away. For the restored

community's commitment to bring their firstfruits, tithes and offerings see Ne 10:35–39. For their failure to do so see Ne 13:10–13; Mal 3:8–10. (CSB)

31:5 *honey*. Though this could not be used in burnt offerings (Lv 2:11), it might have been used in grain offerings. (TLSB)

tithe. Cf Lv 27:30. (TLSB)

31:6 Mosaic Law prescribes no tithe of cattle, sheep, and dedicated things. Nu 18:8–20 provides the firstfruits for the priests; Nu 18:21–32 provides the tithe for the Levites. (TLSB)

31:7 *third month*. May-June, the time of the Feast of Pentecost and the grain harvest. (CSB)

seventh month. September-October, the time of the Feast of Tabernacles and the fruit and vine harvest (see Ex 23:16). (CSB)

Contributions of various kinds of produce came in during the harvesting season, which began in the third month. The Feast of Booths, also called the Feast of Ingathering, in the seventh month marked its end. (TLSB)

31:8 *heaps*. People gave enthusiastically. (TLSB)

31:10 *Azariah*. Person by the same name was “the chief officer of the house of God” (v 13). Another Azariah was high priest during the reign of a king who himself bore that name (26:17; 2Ki 15:1) (TLSB)

31:11 *chambers*. Solomon built side chambers into the walls of the temple. (TLSB)

31:15–19 To make sure no one was overlooked, an enrollment of the priests and the Levites was made in the Levitical cities as well as outside the cities. Vv 17–18 tell how the two groups were registered. (TLSB)

31:16 *three years*. Although no ancient versions or manuscripts disagree with this figure, it may represent a copyist's mistake for “30 years,” the age at which duties were assigned in the temple (1Ch 23:3). (CSB)

Weaned and able to partake of the sacrifices (cf 1Sm 1:23). (TLSB)

31:20–21 Another brief indication of the Chronicler's emphasis on immediate retribution: Not only does disobedience bring immediate chastening, but obedience and seeking God bring prosperity. (CSB)

Ch 31 The Lord blesses Judah under Hezekiah's rule, and Hezekiah reestablishes the support of the priests and Levites. Today, the Lord's people must take account of the need to support their pastors, teachers, and all who are dedicated to the Lord's work. Pray for wisdom in managing the offerings presented at God's house. Bless the Lord for the ministry of the Word, which brings comfort, peace, and hope through Christ, our great High Priest. • Bless all servants of the Word, O Lord, and make me a blessing to them. Amen. (TLSB)