

1 Chronicles

Chapter 23

David Organizes the Levites

When David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. 2 David assembled all the leaders of Israel and the priests and the Levites. 3 The Levites, thirty years old and upward, were numbered, and the total was 38,000 men. 4 “Twenty-four thousand of these,” David said, “shall have charge of the work in the house of the LORD, 6,000 shall be officers and judges, 5 4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 shall offer praises to the LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise.” 6 And David organized them in divisions corresponding to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 7 The sons of Gershon were Ladan and Shimei. 8 The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the chief, and Zetham, and Joel, three. 9 The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran, three. These were the heads of the fathers' houses of Ladan. 10 And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, and Jeush and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei. 11 Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second; but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, therefore they became counted as a single father's house. 12 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13 The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to dedicate the most holy things, that he and his sons forever should make offerings before the LORD and minister to him and pronounce blessings in his name forever. 14 But the sons of Moses the man of God were named among the tribe of Levi. 15 The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. 16 The sons of Gershom: Shebuel the chief. 17 The sons of Eliezer: Rehabiah the chief. Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18 The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief. 19 The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20 The sons of Uzziel: Micah the chief and Isshiah the second. 21 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. 22 Eleazar died having no sons, but only daughters; their kinsmen, the sons of Kish, married them. 23 The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth, three. 24 These were the sons of Levi by their fathers' houses, the heads of fathers' houses as they were listed according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward who were to do the work for the service of the house of the LORD. 25 For David said, “The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people, and he dwells in Jerusalem forever. 26 And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service.” 27 For by the last words of David the sons of Levi were numbered from twenty years old and upward. 28 For their duty was to assist the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God. 29 Their duty was also to assist with the showbread, the flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil, and all measures of quantity or size. 30 And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, 31 and whenever burnt offerings were offered to the LORD on Sabbaths, new moons, and feast days, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD. 32 Thus they were to keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary, and to attend the sons of Aaron, their brothers, for the service of the house of the LORD.

23:1–27:34 David's preparations for the temple were not restricted to amassing materials for the building; he also arranged for its administration and worship. Unique to Chronicles (see note on 22:1–29:30), these details of the organization of the theocracy (God's kingdom) were of vital concern in the Chronicler's own day. Characteristically for the Chronicler, details about religious and cultic matters (chs. 23–26) take precedence over those that are civil and secular (ch. 27). David's arrangements provided the basis and authority for the practices of the restored community. (CSB)

Chs 23–26 Having made Solomon his co-regent, David convened a national assembly at which he organized the temple officiants to assure orderly and regular worship services. The descendants of Levi who were not of the priestly line of Aaron were divided into four groups of varying size, each to function in a different capacity (23:2–6). (TLSB)

23:1 *David was old.* At the end of his life, David had done everything to advance the building of the temple, short of its actual construction. He supported the project financially (21:1–22:5) and morally (22:6–19). (TLSB)

made his son Solomon king. The account of Solomon’s succession is resumed in chs. 28–29. The Chronicler omits the accounts of disputed succession and bloody consolidation recorded in 1Ki 1–2 since these would not be in accord with his overall portrait of David and Solomon. (CSB)

All the assembly will confirm him as king in 29:22b. (TLSB)

23:2–32 Unique to 1Ch, with three major sections: vv 2–5, categories of positions and numbers for each; vv 6–27, divisions according to the sons of Levi; and vv 28–32, a catalog of Levitical duties. Solomon would implement the duties that David had established. (TLSB)

23:2–5 The Levites were not counted in the census that had provoked the wrath of God (21:6–7). (CSB)

23:3 *Levites thirty years old and upward.* The census of Levites was made first in accordance with the Mosaic prescription (Nu 4:1–3). Apparently soon after this count, David instructed that the age be lowered to 20 years (vv. 24, 27); a similar adjustment to age 25 had been made under Moses (Nu 8:23–24, but see note on Nu 8:24). (CSB)

Levites began to minister at age 30. “By the last words of David” (v 27), they were to be registered for service at age 20. (TLSB)

Conforms to the standard of the initial Mosaic census (Nu 4:1–3), but which Moses later lowered to age 25 (Nu 8:23–24). David lowers the age even further, to 20 years old (1Ch 23:24–27). (TLSB)

the total. When “David assembled all Israel ... to bring up the ark,” the number of participating Levites was 862 (15:1–10; cf Nu 3:39). (TLSB)

23:6 *Gershon, Kohath and Merari.* The Levites were organized by their three clans (ch. 6; Ex 6:16–19; Nu 3). This list parallels those in 6:16–30; 24:20–30. (CSB)

The Levites receive special attention here because of their integral role at the temple alongside the priests. Ezra gave the Levites special attention because they were so few in number among those who returned from the exile. (TLSB)

23:27 *last words.* Statement of David’s will. (TLSB)

23:28–32 The function of the Levites was to assist the priests. In addition to the care of the precincts and implements, baked goods and music (mentioned as Levitical duties in 9:22–34), the Chronicler adds details on the role of the Levites assisting in sacrifices. (CSB)

23:30 *morning ... evening.* Under Mosaic Law, the sons of Aaron offered daily sacrifices both in the morning and at twilight (Ex 29:38–41; Nu 28:3–8). David modeled the order of the temple upon the Law given through Moses. (TLSB)

23:32 Though both the priests and the serving Levites were descendants of Levi and thus brothers, one familial grouping served as priests, and the others served as assistants to the priests. In the household of faith, God has established differing roles according to His design, yet all are one as sons and daughters of God. Service in one role or another does not and cannot imply superiority or inferiority. (TLSB)

Ch 23 David organizes the Levites for service at Jerusalem because they have earlier been spread throughout the tribes. Throughout Scripture, we see the importance of organized worship services, which God still expects of us today. Although congregations are imperfect because they are composed of sinners, the Lord has still entrusted to them His precious Word and Sacraments for the sake of our forgiveness through the Gospel. Treasure your congregation as the site from which the Lord has promised to bless you. • O Lord, bless my congregation with unity and peace, so that the Gospel may be taught in its purity and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. Amen. (TLSB)