

**EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



**“Last Words” Commentary  
1 CHRONICLES**

**(Looking Back – Ezra’s View of World History)**

**BY**

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**[BOOK 2]**

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**WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?**

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

**HOW CAN I BE SAVED?**

**Salvation is available for all members of the human race.**

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation, neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

**How do I become a Christian?**

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

**The results of Salvation**

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:

My sins are taken away (John 1:29),

I possess eternal life now (1 John 5:11,12),

I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),

The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (1 Corinthians 6:19),

And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

Many other Christian resources are available freely from our internet web site: [www.ebcwa.org.au](http://www.ebcwa.org.au) and [www.ebcwa.com](http://www.ebcwa.com) for weekly messages. For further information contact Dr Peter Moses at [pjmoses@bigpond.com.au](mailto:pjmoses@bigpond.com.au) or Brian Huggett [brianhuggett@bigpond.com.au](mailto:brianhuggett@bigpond.com.au)

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**Note** No specific Doctrines will be included in this book, or 2 Chronicles. The Doctrines to be usefully studied with each section of this book are to be found in the associated parallel passages in Samuel or Kings. We have decided to leave all reference to doctrines out of this study due to its unique nature in the Old Testament; we want you to feel the urgency of Ezra's words. Look up all **bold text** references.

Ezra is looking back over the centuries and recording things that he wants checked with the other historic books, and so we want you to have the associated Commentary open for the appropriate sections of Chronicles. Ezra is making a spiritual point at every shift and turn in World/Israelite history, for he wants his people, and us to see, that God's people are blessed when they walk close to Him, and they are under divine discipline when they walk away. His words are critical in our Post-Covid world as we see the massive manipulation of opinion by evil politicians and their media allies. **Matthew 4:8-10**. Satan loves political power, and the kingdoms were his to offer the Lord, and we suspect they still are.

Ezra's big message is that spiritual compromise is fatal over time. It still is!!!

## **1 CHRONICLES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Our Lord draws attention to this book, as recorded in **Luke 11:45-52**, criticizing the “lawyers/scribes” who honour Ezra but ignore his words, just as they honour dead prophets by building their tombs, yet their parents murdered these prophets and they still ignore their words! It is our belief that Chronicles is a second viewpoint on redemptive History (backing up the other historical books and prophetic words), in much the same way as Deuteronomy is the second reading/interpreting of the Law by Moses, after forty years of reflection during desert wanderings. **Read also Matthew 24:15-28, Luke 17:26-33.**

Ezra has had the time, nearly 100 years, since the return from Exile to reflect on what led to the Exile and what has led to the strong establishment of the nation again, even though as a Province of the Persian Empire. We believe Chronicles is written by Ezra around 440BC, with only Malachi still to be written to complete the Old Testament Canon, around 399BC.

Ezra, gives us the spiritual perspective on the history of Israel as the people of God, but also includes the other people groups that flow from Noah’s three sons. We all find our ancestors in the first chapter of this book, and we see their destiny is related to their acceptance of the Creator and Saviour, his redemptive line through Shem, and finding and accepting their own place in history. We all have a part to play in “the great unfolding drama of redemption”, and joy and eternal reward comes from discovering that individual part and fulfilling it whole heartedly.

We have mankind divided into their families, but the determined unsaved are not rated a mention in this book, for they have no eternal destiny, except with Satan forever. Chronicles will not record the history of the Northern Kingdom, for it is the kingdom of men and women in rebellion against God. It will not mention David’s great sin, not because it didn’t occur (clearly and openly mentioned in Samuel as other king’s sins are mentioned clearly in Kings), but because David is forgiven.

Chronicles reminds us that the words of **Psalm 103:10-17** are not just a promise of God to be read and forgotten, they are how God sees us – we are forgiven and our sins are seen no more! These two books give us God’s perspective on the lives of His Saints, and God sees our confessed sins no more!!! Ezra realised that there is never time for looking back in guilt, only time to look forward in obedience to the path.

**Psalm 103:10** *“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children;”*

Chronicles gives us the “Priestly Version” of world history, and the priest brings the sacrifices, and each of them speak of the final sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for all mankind for all space-time. That means the spiritual journey that mankind has made through faith and failure, but by means of God’s grace, mercy and truth ends in victory for those who have “kissed the Son”. **Psalm 2:12**. The priestly role is to mediate God’s viewpoint, and our author does that clearly, and by what is both said and not said communicates God’s eternal viewpoint. We are challenged by this book to “get” the eternal viewpoint on our brief walk through space and time, and not be distracted by the things that disable, distress and derail the people we read about in Samuel, and Kings.

It is a much attacked book, like all the “Last Words” books, and yet we believe it records Ezra’s, and the other scribes of the first synagogues, Holy Spirit inspired viewpoint of the history of redemption to their day. The great lists of names are skipped over by most today, but if God saw the necessity to record the chart of the family of nations in Genesis 10 and again here in the opening chapters of Chronicles, then we need to pause and reflect upon the names.

They are our physical and spiritual ancestors, and we will meet them in heaven. How rude many bible students are to ignore them here! These are our Grand-parents, both genetically and spiritually, and so let’s meet our family here and rejoice with them in their faith, the faith we share in the One True, and Only God over all. We can still see what they looked like, for we can look in our bathroom mirror and see them

smiling back at us. These people made us, and we are challenged by them to live for eternal values and affirm the truth that we will meet them eternally, and enjoy eternity with them.

We are reminded here of the equality of all people groups on the earth, and the equal dignity and depravity of each of us. We are reminded that many people groups today at loggerheads are relatives, and not too far back! In days when prophetic predictions are lining up for the end of the Age and the return of our Lord it is appropriate that we reflect on how things started with mankind, as well as how they will end.

As far back as 1975 Arthur Custance recorded the following observation of this book and Genesis. "As a purely historic document, it has provided insights into the relationships between peoples that are only now becoming attainable by other means, thereby adding its testimony to the reliability of the Genesis record." ("Noah's Three Sons", Page 62.) Dr Custance was not to know how prophetic these words were in 1975, as we now, in 2022 see advances in DNA reading that means the twelve tribes of Israel can be genetically identified and sorted, and the migrations of all people groups traced through their millennia long journeys.

Equality is a catch cry of the modern world. Custance notes, "The only ground for attaching to all men an equal level of worth is the tremendous fact that all souls have equal value to God. Assuredly they do not have equal value to society." (IBID, page 64.) God celebrates equality in diversity, but wants excellence!

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1:1 Adam, Seth, Enosh,**

We follow the godly line of believers here, and it is appropriate, given the unbelievers implode and perish at the flood. We begin with "Adam", the man made from the earth, the mortal man, who lost eternal life through sinfulness, but with Eve, received it back by grace through the blood of the animal sacrifice. **Genesis 3:21.**

Abel's murder by Cain is not mentioned, because Abel leaves history and enters heaven, and Cain heads away to live his empty life in pursuit of pleasure, and for eternity is separated from God. Seth is mentioned after Adam, the next believer who passes on his DNA to us all. His name means "substituted", for he is placed in the room left by Abel. We are reminded that we all stand because of the Lord's substitutionary sacrifice for us all. Abel's murder did not mean victory for evil, for the Lord raised up Seth.

Enosh means "frail, mortal", and reminds us that we are all here for a short time only, and we are frail in our grip of space and time, health and fitness. The pre-flood patriarchs lived for many more years than we do, in the post-flood world without its vapour canopy cover to stop aging rays reaching us.

At the time of the flood the lifetime of mankind was reduced by God to 120 years, and some still attain that today, but for most it is "three score and ten". Genesis 6:3, Psalm 90:10. We are all allotted the 70 years that have been the standard since the flood, and it will remain the standard until the Millennium restores the pre-flood conditions. We are reminded by our aging process to "number/buy up our days". **Psalm 90:10-12, Proverbs 4:23, Ephesians 5:15-18.**

### **1:2 Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered,**

Kenan means "fixed", and all of us are "fixed" or stable on this planet only when we are in right relationship with God. There is mental, physical, spiritual and societal stability only in relationship with God. Our hearts (emotions) and our minds (thinking) are only "stablished" by being rooted and grounded in the realities of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The stability of mankind depends upon the "ground" they are standing upon. We stand upon the blood soaked ground that Jesus won. **1 Thessalonians 3:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:17, 3:3, James 5:8, 1 Peter 5:5-10.**

Mahalaleel means "the praise of God", and reminds us of the truth that to worship is to strengthen ourselves under pressure. The garments of praise alone help us put off the spirit of heaviness! **Isaiah 61:3.**

Our ancestor Jered, meaning "descending" reminds us of the Lord descending to become a man and dwell amongst us, **John 1:1-14**, but also our own tendency to follow the second law of thermodynamics – and decay and decline, rather than grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord as we ought. **2 Peter 3:18.**

### **1:3 Henoah, Methuselah, Lamech,**

Enoch reminds us of the need to be “trained/exercised” in godliness. **1 Timothy 4:7-8**. His name can also mean “dedicated and initiated”. It is the challenge from our ancestor’s name that I hear this morning, to be seriously devoted to the Word, the Spirit that enlivens it, the Lord who gave it, and the Father who planned it. We are to be whole hearted, and “set aside” for the Lord’s work. **1 Thessalonians 5:23**. This man was known as the man who “walked with God”, and one day simply walked into heaven – it’s a great picture of what our daily life is to be – constant fellowship with our Lord to our relaxing into the Lord’s embrace through death. **Genesis 5:24, Acts 7:56-60**.

Methuselah’s name may mean, “when he dies it shall be sent”, and refer to the certainty of judgment at the flood that would come indeed after he breathes his last. It is a reminder that Noah was not alone as he preached, for he had his godly older relatives to encourage for the first years, and this man for all the years of his building and preaching. This man had no lasting grave; all he knew was swept away. Methuselah’s name may also mean, “man of the branch”, and as this is a title for Christ, it is fitting for this ancestor who loved God in the midst of a truly perverse generation. **John 15:1-17, Philippians 2:14-16**.

Lamech means “strong man”; “powerful one”. He sets an example to Noah of stability and strong faith, and Noah will hear God’s Word and obey, possibly backed by the strong encouragement of this man also. We will only know in heaven how these great men and the women who stood with them believed and obeyed the Word, but they are recorded here as the ancestors of our true faith, so embrace them as “your people”, for they indeed are, and they are for eternity. **2 Corinthians 12:10, Ephesians 6:10, 2 Timothy 2:1**.

#### **1:4 Noah, Shem, Ham, And Japheth.**

Noah means “faith-rest”; rest and comfort in the Lord. There is no stable walk through the spiritual battlefields of this world without saving and dynamic living faith, and there is no triumphant leaving our brief walk through space-time on this world without “dying grace”. **Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12, 11:1-3**.

We now come to the “great DNA divide”, for all mankind splits into three families here, although for most of us with great mixing through the centuries also. Shem means “specific position of honour”, and he will be the ancestor of the Semitic peoples who will lead to Abraham, the man we will follow mainly in this genealogical account of ancestry. The spiritual blessing for mankind will come only within the “tents of Shem”. **Genesis 9:27**.

Ham means “hot/warm, or dark”, and refers to the many families of nations with mainly darker skin that will live within the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Remember skin colouring is on a sliding scale, and all groups have a wide variety of skin pigmentations.

Japheth means “expansion/enlarging” and refers to a character trait of the Japhetic/Caucasian people groups, for they will be always moving onwards, expanding their territories (for good and for bad). They will have the drive that the other two sons lack at times, but their spiritual blessing, like the sons of Ham, comes from hearing the spiritual teaching of the one coming “in the tents of Shem”.

#### **1:5 The Sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.**

While it has previously been hard to identify many of the people groups we will read of below, it is becoming clearer and easier to identify them, as DNA research and mapping is advancing very fast since 2015. Many people are discovering their DNA through tests and establishing these links, and this scientific and genealogical interest coincides with this work to write up the people of Chronicles. We reflect that we were going to do this commentary in 2009, but were stopped by the Lord, and the reason – it wasn’t the right time!

These are some of our ancestors, and we need to honour them, for we will spend eternity with our saved ancestors. Hebrews Chapter 11 reminds us of this fact. From this point onwards the names become harder to establish initial meanings for, and are often simply the title for the people group; Gauls, Scythians, Medes, Ionian Greeks, and two groups who settled in what is now northern Turkey.

#### **1:6 And the sons of Gomer; Ashchenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.**

Caucasian people groups appear to be described here, include likely the ancestors of some of the German tribes, and the various groups around the area settled by the Armenians.

#### **1:7 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.**

More Caucasian groups here; with the “Helles”, Carthaginians, Cretans, and Dorian Greeks. It is intriguing that the writer here correctly identifies that the Greeks are not one people group. Isn't it funny that we often find commentators surprised at the accuracy of the Bible, as it was only around 200 years ago that historians recognized the various “tribes/waves” of the people we now call the Greeks, and their very mixed origins.

**1:8 The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.**

The sons of “hot” (Ham) were these four men. First is Ethiopia/Arabian Peninsula people groups(Cush), then Mizraim (Egypt), then Put (possibly a Persian tribe). Both these men will produce multiple nations that will have interesting interactions with God's people.

The Egyptians will figure in redemptive history through the wife of Abram, Hagar, Genesis 16, who is a strong believer, and Ishmael will go on to found many Arab nations, and many believers are here in his line later referred to. Ethiopia will produce Pharaoh Tihakah for Egypt in a later day, (**2 Kings 19, Isaiah 37**) but also the Ethiopian Eunuch who will bring salvation to that nation through the evangelism of Philip. **Acts 8:27ff.**

Canaan means “humiliated”, but also can mean merchant/trafficker in goods and people. This is the cursed son of Ham, and he is truly cursed in his interests, for Canaan became the byword for pagan excess in its sexualized worship and abuse of human beings through child sacrifice. Yet from Canaan we have key women and men saved through redemptive history. Tamar (**Genesis 38**) and Rahab (**Joshua 2**) are Canaanites in the line of Jesus, cursing turned to blessing through salvation, and these women and many others taking their place in the Plan of God. **Galatians 3:11-13.** Mamre, Aner and Eschol are Canaanite believers in confederation with Abram. **Genesis 14.**

Jesus also praises a Canaanite woman who comes to him. **Matthew 15:22.** One of the disciples is also called “Simon the Canaanite”, Matthew 10:4, although we don't know whether he is a racial Canaanite, but he may have been. Rather than running off with the truth of the sexual immorality of Canaan, and writing them all off, let's see God's perspective here; for through grace offered salvation, received by faith, many Canaanites enter the Plan of God as the “remnant of faith”, all genuine believers, and we will fellowship with them forever in eternity. These saved men and women are amazing mentors of dynamic saving faith.

Chronicles brings “good news” – no matter how “cursed” and depraved our genetic line, we can receive grace, mercy and peace, by God's Grace, through faith; the Saviour will always find us if we desire God's path through space-time. **Matthew 11:28-30.**

Cursing may always be turned to blessing through faith expressed in action. It is always about the choices people make. Moses' appeal to the people reflects the message of all of Scripture. “Choose Life!” **Deuteronomy 30:15-20.** All these names reflect life choices – and eternal consequences.

**1:9 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtechah. And the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.**

Cush, as we see from this list produces some extremely interesting people that have entered into history and literature. The Queen of Sheba will visit Solomon and have children to him, and return to establish a line of Ethiopian kings, but Sheba may also be the father of the Sabteans.

At this distance we don't know, but the writer records their names, as believers are here who change history in their nations/people groups by their Patriarchal faith. They stand like Abraham will stand later, and they express faith in God's Word to them. They are obedient when the majority walk away from God into arrogant independence. **Hebrews 11:1-3.**

We have no clear idea of the meanings of these names at the time of writing in the Akkadian, nor of the exact regions. Dedan is in Arabia, and possibly is part of what we know as the Emirates today. They will yet play their part in redemptive history in the invasion of Israel described in Ezekiel 38-39; they will support Israel, and in the Tribulation and Millennium, they will stand with other believers to praise the glory of God. Refer to the Book 121 – Arab Nations in the Last Days.

**1:10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth.**



Nimrod (Refer to the Bible Topic Book – “Nimrod”) is the fore-runner of the AntiChrist himself and yet there is salvation even within his line, although his people were “mighty in their own eyes” and become the potent picture of the alternative to those who walk in grace and obedience to God. Was he the father of the Assyrians? Their capital city is later called “Nimrod/Nimrud”, and if they are direct descendants we know, from Jonah’s ministry to them, that an entire generation of his descendants find faith.

**Isaiah 5:15** notes, “the mighty man is humbled”, for in humility alone there is salvation, for it requires us to bow our knee to God. People who are “mighty” are often too full of themselves to accept faith. **Zephaniah 3:17, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.**

Humility is God’s path to eternal greatness, arrogance remains Satan’s alternative to join him forever in the Lake of Fire. The choice each person faces has not changed from these earliest days; will we bow before Almighty God, or try to pretend we are “almighty” ourselves? **Philippians 2:5-13.**

**1:11 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim,**

The names here are quite long and give every indication of being the names of the ancient people groups who form the base of the Egyptian population before the later Arab invasions.

**1:12 And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines,) and Caphthorim.**

We must take the Holy Spirit filled writer here as our source, and what he notes here is interesting, as he identifies the tribes of the Philistines as a branch of the family that includes the Egyptians. The Philistines will wreak havoc through the Middle East in the 1200s BC and make their way down to invade Egypt, and the battles there will be close run things.

The Pharaoh gives them Canaan to settle and they conquer the cities of the coast and settle in the previously Canaanite cities, and in effect garrison the land for Egypt, controlling the Hebrews in the higher country. They will later be included in David’s kingdom, with his honour guard made up of Cretan and Philistine mercenaries, who will prove loyal to him through the Absalom revolt. **2 Samuel 15-18.**

Once again many believers emerge from these initially murderous pagans. God’s message through Ezra here – is do not write people off as “too pagan” to be saved. The worst man in history has been saved – Saul of Tarsus – and he was self righteous! **1 Timothy 1:15.** Call no-one doomed to hell – until they die in unbelief – for if Saul of Tarsus could be saved – all can – “IF” they will bow before God.

**1:13 And Canaan begat Zidon his firstborn, and Heth,**

Canaan also is the father of two extremely significant people groups; the Zidonians and the Hittites. The Zidonians are one of the groups making up the people known later as the Phoenicians/Carthaginians. The Carthaginians will be nearly all wiped out by the Romans, but before this genocide Hiram will be their king at Tyre and be the friend of Solomon.

The Hittites were lost to history, as their area of influence was wiped out by successive waves of invaders and only ruins remained, but we have loyal believers from them; men like “Uriah the Hittite”, so badly abused by David. **2 Samuel 11.**

The pictures we have of the Hittites from their abandoned and destroyed cities are interesting to say the least, for they are Chinese in appearance, even to the long pigtailed that we later see in the Mandarins. We cannot be sure at this distance, but DNA studies may reveal some interesting connections.

**1:14 The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, 15 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, 16 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.**

The nations Abram meets in Canaan and the nations that Joshua and subsequent generations fight against are listed here, and from them may come the believers we read of in the scripture also, including Tamar and Rahab.

Once again, we see that our writer is reminding us that the legacy of Canaan is not all curse, but through saving faith is blessing also. God’s ability to transform individuals and nations through faith revival is astonishing to many, but our writer is being deliberate in his edit of the Genesis records to underline God’s redemptive power.

**1:17 The sons of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech.**

The sons of Shem are indeed wide spread, and appear to incorporate some of the Scythian and the Elamite Tribes, as well as others who settled in what is now Iraq. People from this group of nations will also possibly be involved in the invasion of Ezekiel 38-39, but as the enemies of the other Shemite people of God.

Even here there are believers and we will meet many from these groups in heaven, and may even come across a few ancestors if we have DNA from the Iraq area. We are apt to forget that the Lord's challenge to each person to a salvation response will produce salvation for some but rejection and judgment for others. Those who have moved from opened to the truth, to hatred of the truth will hate us! Division in family and people groups is the norm, not the exception after the message of salvation has come. **Luke 12:49-53, John 15:18ff.**

**1:18 And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber. 19 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg; because in his days the earth was divided: and his brother's name was Joktan.**

The root meanings of the first two names here have been lost in the mists of time. Eber appears to be the root of the proper name, "Hebrew", that will be the given name of the people of God. The name means, "one who crossed over", but may also mean "traveller"; both of which indicate more than travel for commerce; they indicate a readiness for departing from the accepted norms and habits of the people around them.

The people of the new earth quickly reverted to the paganism of their ancestors before the flood. Theologians have argued that monotheism developed over time from polytheism. This is an evolutionary theory, and without logic, for man deteriorates in behaviours, he does not ascend unless "nudged" along a higher path.

The impact of the Hebrew (or the earliest language of writing the scriptures - Akkadian) Scriptures on Greek thought is yet to be uncovered, but the Greek philosophers appear at times to be quoting the earlier Hebrew Prophets. Great Pre-Socratic thought emerges several hundred years after David, Solomon and Isaiah. Monotheistic thought amongst the Greeks may be argued to be a development from the Bible, not the Philosophers. The Akkadian language may be the means of transmission of God's revelation from the Patriarchs especially, and then Moses also, through the entire eastern Mediterranean. Ezra does the final "edit" of the Scriptures and we may find he is the one who lifts all the language into the "Classical Hebrew".

Akhenaton certainly is not the "inventor of mono-theism" as those who hate God and Christianity argue, for he lives in the years after Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt. Any monotheistic development in Egypt we suspect develops as a result of the destruction of the gods by divine judgment. Refer to the Commentary on Exodus, where the specific judgment on each of the gods is discussed. Eber's line divides, with one son Peleg (division = at his time the Tower of Babel incident likely occurred, when mankind was fully divided into language and people groups) carrying on his father's faith in power.

Whatever happened in Eber's life time, he was known as the one who crosses over, and in effect returns to the monotheism of their ancestors. The Bible is clear, monotheism is the God given and anointed historic faith of Man, from the blood sacrifices outside the gates of the Garden of Eden, but it is opposed by those who hate God and resent His instructions to mankind. Genesis 3ff.

The battle for the minds of mankind began in the garden, and the satanic viewpoint has always pushed polytheism ahead of atheism, as its addictive distracting power will hold people securely in hell easier than the hopelessness of atheism. **Psalms 14:1, 53:1.**

**1:20 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, 21 Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah, 22 And Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 23 And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan.**

Arabian traditions abound as to the meanings and significance of these names, but they are best not speculated upon by those not fluent in old Arabic and knowledgeable of the pre-Moslem traditions. There are some fanciful explanations of these names that are to be rejected as mere speculation. These are the early tribes of Arabia, who will mix with the later groups who stem from the sons of Hagar the Egyptian's son Ishmael, and the many sons of Keturah and Abraham (below).

The DNA of the greater Arabian Peninsula is interesting to say the least; with many widely different people groups forming the tribes. Remember our author is writing these names down for believers who have ancestry from these peoples, and if that is you, research these names in the Arabic literature, and rejoice, for many of these people were believers and you will meet them in heaven as your “grand-fathers”, or “great uncles”. Remember Ezra’s point – don’t see racial differences, see spiritual connections – they are family!

**1:24 Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25 Eber, Peleg, Reu,**

We now return to the line that will lead us to Abram. The writer wants us to remember this is the “line of Shem” that will lead to the King of kings, and so he re-grounds us in its foundation in Shem. The name added here is Reu, meaning “friend/companion”. In the midst of the great social upheavals after Babel this is a great name, and reminds us that those walking with God have the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” within them, and bring friendship and joy to those around them. **Matthew 7:13-23, Galatians 5:16-26, Romans 6:21-23, 7:4-6, 9:16-23.**

**1:26 Serug, Nahor, Terah,**

We do not know securely the meaning of Serug’s name, but Nahor is simply “snoring”. His son Terah will be an idolater, and Abram will take him with him on his journey away from Ur, that was the home of religious idolatry in their day. **Joshua 24:2ff.** These men are apparently believers but compromised ones, and given the incredible religious pressures upon them, that is understandable – as to fail to conform in this day was seen as traitorous behaviour. We forget at our peril the satanic viewpoint – religion is his main control mechanism for holding mankind distracted.

Religion has always been an “opiate” and failure to conform with a State religion has always been seen as disloyalty, and dangerous. Abram will move right away from the civilization of Ur to be free to worship as his godly ancestors did, and his father will go along, although with his idols in tow. Idolatry will be the main problem for the Abrahamic line of Shem, right up until the Babylonian Captivity. I find it intriguing that God had to take his people back to the home of idolatry to finally rid his people of that self-destructive satanic viewpoint. Making an idol and then bowing before it, is truly a “magical” piece of stupidity, yet we still worship things, people and nebulous ideas like fame/reputation..... **Isaiah 44:9-20.**

**1:27 Abram; the same is Abraham.**

Abram, the “father of high and windy/lofty places”, becomes the “Father of a multitude”. Both names given before children are born to him, and so they are names of faith, and he becomes the father of all who rest in faith in God’s completed work. **Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-19.**

**1:28 The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael.**

We now move to the family and descendants of Abraham, and the whole drama of redemption for mankind now really “hots up” within this family, and in all people groups attitudes towards them. Remember the promise of blessing to Abraham was delivered to him before he moves out of Ur, and in obedience to his call he moves out. The promise applies to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, and in our own day we see them coming together again, as they face the threats coming from Iran and their extremist puppets in Iraq-Syria-Lebanon.

Remember the words of **Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:3-6,** for they are promises given before Ishmael and Isaac’s, and Keturah’s son’s birth. They therefore apply to all the descendants that flow from Abraham, and it is the reminder that many amongst the Arab peoples are recipients of Abrahamic blessing now and forever, and by the same means as Abraham himself; by faith, through God’s mercy, love and grace.

**1:29 These are their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 30 Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema, 31 Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.**

Once again I must note that a thorough knowledge of the Arabic people groups is essential to say anything here, and while my ancestry includes this DNA, my knowledge is not sufficient to do anything other than pass on the speculations of others, and having read many, I find them unsatisfying and superficial.

We cannot know the meaning of many of these names, but those we know are spiritually very positive, and Kedar especially (Emirates today) will play their part in the future in dark days of the Tribulation, and be a blessing, for they are mentioned as part of the start of Millennial blessing. **Isaiah 42:10-15, 60:1-10.**

**1:32 Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan. 33 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Henoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the sons of Keturah.**

The sons of Keturah and Abraham also give rise to many of the tribes of the greater Arabian area, from Iraq to Oman. They mix with prior groups and form the mix of today's Saudi Arabia, parts of Iraq and Syria, the Emirates and Jordan. It is important with so many short sighted and biased commentators writing for centuries that we include the Arab peoples with the Israeli in blessing, for God's Word is clear; the story ends with all the Sons of Abraham working together. Do not forget the Arab sons of Abraham, for they share God's blessing with Israel!

**1:34 And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel.**

Do not call these men Jews, for they are not. The term "Jews" comes from Judah, the son of Jacob, and will not be used before the days **after** the Babylonian captivity, and there it reflects the truth that the majority of the captives were "of Judah". The story of Isaac and Esau is fully told in Genesis. Our writer is reminding us that our choices matter in time and they matter for eternity.

Isaac is "laughter", the laughter of faith that is "too good to be true", and yet it is true, and by faith it is embraced and enjoyed. Esau, "old red", is sadly a man who one of the few in scripture that God says is "hated". Any individual or people group has to work very hard to get to this place, and sadly Esau as a man and a people group does in both mental attitude and actions/belief systems. **Malachi 1:1-5, Romans 9:1-16.**

**1:35 The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 36 The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek. 37 The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. 38 And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan. 39 And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna was Lotan's sister. 40 The sons of Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. And the sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah. 41 The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amram, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 42 The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, and Jakan. The sons of Dishan; Uz, and Aran. 43 Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city was Dinhabah.**

We have no way of knowing whether the Eliphaz here is the same man who speaks with Job, although the reference to him being a "Temanite" would indicate that he is of this line, and indicates the old age of Job, being written well before the rest of the Bible. **Job 4:1.** If he is of Esau, we have an interesting viewpoint on the very orthodox and religious family of Esau; and this man especially sounds like many arrogant theologians today. They think they know more than they do! God's judgment is clear in **Job 42**, and Eliphaz and the others are condemned thoroughly for their certitude where humility was required.

**1:44 And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead.**

The kings or "Allufim" of Esau's line are noted, and some are mighty men of war, but few are spiritual in any shape or form, and some have the give away name of "Baal" – god, but actually demon male figure of the deity for the pagans of that day. Remember as our writer records these details, he is able clearly to access the records Esau delivered to his brother and are found in Genesis, but he may also have more information in front of him. Bozrah is mentioned as one of the seats of power of the Edomites, and this area will yet have its greatest day, for it is the place the Arab/Jewish believers flee in the dangerous days of the Great Tribulation, and from where they are delivered by the Lord personally. **Isaiah 63:1ff.**

If Ezra is indeed our author, as we believe, then as Satrap of Judea, he would have had access to all the Persian records of his day also. This section has all the signs of Ezra working carefully from written records, and our suspicion is that his records were way more extensive than simply Genesis. Note the names below also, and reflect on Ezra's words, "when he was dead..." All the great kings, mighty though they were in their own eyes, and in the eyes of others, they all died and were replaced – we all are!!! **Hebrews 9:26-28.**

**“1:45 And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. 46 And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. 47 And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 48 And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead. 49 And when Shaul was dead, Baalhanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 50 And when Baalhanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pai; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. 51 Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were; duke Timnah, duke Aliah, duke Jetheth, 52 Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, 53 Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, 54 Duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These are the dukes of Edom.”**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Some choices are eternal in their significance, and our role as believers is to ensure that we point this out to all who hear our words. All die, and yet the satanic nature of religion and other distractions is such that people are encouraged to ignore the truth of mortality and judgment, and just “go for it” with economic and other forms of prosperity.

### [b] Pastoral

Our message – remains strongly – “Look up people!” See your God and respond to Him now while you may. Respond to the truth indeed and ensure that you do all that you are encouraged to do by the Lord. Do not waste time here during your brief walk through space-time. Redeem the time (buy up every moment and use it wisely) for the days are evil. **Ephesians 5:15-21.**

## CHAPTER 2

**2:1 These are the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, 2 Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 3 The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him. 4 And Tamar his daughter in law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five.**

## REFLECTION

We won't take up the space to repeat what is said else-where, rather we will refer you to the other passages and draw attention to Ezra's observations in making any points by this list above reinforcing the Torah record, and that of Joshua, and the work of the authors of Samuel and Solomon's day. Ezra's focus is on the believers in the line of David and their very ordinary and “fallen” nature. None of these men were perfect, or even close to it, and the women mentioned are Canaanite, but more focused on what was right than the men were at times. **Genesis 38, 46.**

Immorality or any other sin doesn't stop the plan of God **if, but only if**, there is repentance. It is repentance and life change that Ezra is drawing our attention to here, not birth origins and previous behaviours; he is focused upon moral change of life direction. Dealing with sin gives you a future, but failing to deal with it gives you only pain and judgment. Judah's sons are judged for their sin, and fatally so, as their sin was so bad it could lead to the end of the line, but God through Tamar secures for David his future.

Ezra is facing gross sinfulness of exactly the same sort in his day, with Israelite men marrying pagans, and their children being brought up to be pagans also. **Ezra Chapter 9-10.** He ends his book with a list of shame, **Ezra 10:20-44**, all of the men mentioned will be descendants of the men listed below and in subsequent chapters. Ezra's point here is clear; every generation must make its stand against spiritual compromise, or their descendants will be swept away into sin in time and eternity without God.

**2:5 The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul. 6 And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all. 7 And the sons of Carmi; Achan, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed. 8 And the sons of Ethan; Azariah. 9 The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai. 10 And Ram begat Amminadab; and**

**Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah; 11 And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz, 12 And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse,**

## REFLECTION

We have a number of people mentioned in scripture here. Keep remembering the reason for the great lists, as each Israelite returning from Babylonian Exile, either under Joshua and Zerubbabel, or under Ezra and Nehemiah had to prove their lineage, and so the lists were more than just academic history. They were the lists that a father or mother could take their children to in the temple and recite the genealogy back to the great people of the past.

Hebrews 11 takes us back to this place, where we remember our “fathers/mothers in faith”, and then **Hebrews 12:1-3** reminds us they are cheering us on from the stands of heaven as we walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Achan is the first mentioned, as he is from the senior line, and the tragedy is he failed through uncontrolled lust. He failed and left the line of promise by execution for theft that was at its heart rebellion against God’s clear command. We can look at this man and in our modern day we think of all the reasons why, after generations of slavery a man might be tempted to steal for family wealth and security later. We are used to devious lawyers winning sympathy for evil women and men by talking about their troubled pasts, but Achan’s past slavery was not the issue, his free volition and disobedience on the day in question was the issue. **Joshua 7:1-26, 22:20**. Our volition and decision to follow God’s Word above all lusts is our daily challenge.

Adam’s sin of disobedience had the death penalty attached to it, but the animals died in Adam and Eve’s place, and so our ancestors wore clothes of skins, and were reminded, disobedience is fatal, but grace is sufficient, but the cost of the provision of grace is high. The animal sacrifices were the sign, and an awful sign in blood, for early mankind of what the real cost of sin and evil is, but the Cross would be the full picture of what man’s sin has done within the Creation. **John 3:14-21, 36**. Only God’s specific grace and mercy can meet the need for salvation. **Acts 4:12**. Volition remains the test for mankind, just as it was in the Garden of Eden; will we do things our way, or obey God? “Be sure your sins will find you out”. **Numbers 32:23**.

Nahshon the prince is mentioned, and we are challenged to go back to the Exodus Journey and remember that the “princes” of Israel were not spiritually strong, nor stable, but rather argued against faith at times, thirteen times in open rebellion against Moses and Aaron. They support Moses in the end, but it is God’s grace alone that means they live to do so! Follow Nahshon’s story, from **Numbers 1:7**, where he is recognized as the leader of the tribe of Judah. This means he must have shown exceptional leadership in slavery to have the respect of his people, not just be recognized from his birth.

He leads his tribe in the offerings for the Tabernacle. Numbers 10:10ff. He led the army of Judah and was respected as a “mighty man”. Numbers 10:14. Yet he was one of the princes who did not believe the report of Caleb and Joshua, for sadly all the princes failed to believe the faith-report! **Numbers 14:1-5**. God’s reaction was open and hostile to the people who rebelled, for they doubted His Word, but through Moses prayer the princes and the people were delivered. Like Job’s prayer for his “friends” many centuries before, Moses prayer was gracious. **Numbers 14:18-19, Job 42:7-9**. Was he later part of the “princes” rebellion with Korah? **Numbers 16:1-4**. He being certainly one of the twelve princes who had to see and openly recognize Aaron’s rod, showed that Aaron was to be heard and respected. **Numbers 17**.

Nahshon is one of the Exodus Generation and he is their war leader and respected judge and prince, and yet he loses his life, like all others of that generation other than two men, and it will be one of the two men who replace him as prince of Judah. Caleb, the spy he hadn’t believed becomes the new “Prince of Judah” to lead the tribe into Canaan and divide the land for his tribe. **Numbers 34:19**. Nahshon reminds us that failure to hear the Word of God either directly through the Word, or through the words of godly women or men, will not enter into the rewards of time or eternity that could have been theirs had they been obedient. The principle is written up for us to reflect upon in **Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12**.

Boaz is the third man who stands out to us in this section, and he is a man who is by birth the “prince”, but more importantly, he is by character a prince. Character is formed by repeated godliness and obedience to the Word and will of God for the life. Boaz is a man who seeks the path of character and wants a woman in his life who has the character he sees is needed in difficult and testing times. The Philistines arrive at some point in his life and although the Book of Ruth tells us much about the love story, it doesn’t paint the very dangerous context in which it occurred.

Boaz doesn't marry earlier, and even though wealthy and powerful, and of noble birth, he waits for God's chosen one to wed and finds her in the hard working, noble, moral and yet poor refugee Ruth. Reflect upon the story of Ruth, and ask that question of faith that Ezra is challenging us to ask here in Chronicles – will we stand with Boaz and Ruth, or do we accept second best alternatives to God's path because we cannot wait for God's clarity, or we follow men's viewpoint and select wealth and social position?

**2:13 And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third, 14 Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, 15 Ozem the sixth, David the seventh: 16 Whose sisters were Zeruah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17 And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.**

## REFLECTION

There is a shock to many as they read these verses, especially if they have studied the two books of Samuel first, as we should have. There is a breakthrough in understanding about the awfulness of the later actions of Joab, as we see the relationship he had to the men he murdered. Amasa was a foolish commander and inferior in every way to Joab, but his murder was the killing of his mother's sister's son! He kills his cousin! He is a man without feelings of family, only for himself, although in the early days of David's kingship he is loyal to David.

Joab became increasingly narcissistic and paranoid as he grew older, as Saul had. He didn't trust David to reward him and give him honourable retirement, and he played politics in the Great Rebellion of Absalom. He misses the "plumb job" of general and hates the man who gets it; his cousin Amasa. **2 Samuel 17:25.**

Maybe he despised his aunt's choice of an Ishmaelite for a husband and saw Amasa as a "half-breed" Israelite, but if that was the case, he was doubly wrong, for all through salvation become equal in and through their relationship with God. Also, they all as a family descended from Ruth, the Moabitess, and earlier from Rahab and Tamar the Canaanites! It's not our birth, it's our being "born again" that matters. **John 3:1-16.**

The family of David is an interesting one, and we are reminded that he is the youngest of seven, and was not rated initially by his father, his mother, uncles, aunts, or cousins as the deliverer of Israel. God lifts up the young man David, and has him in Saul's Court to learn, and he learns what is right, and he learns what is wrong about kingship from the court of Saul. **1 Samuel 16:14-23.**

God then ensures David is in the right place at the right time to meet Goliath. **1 Samuel 17. 1 Peter 5:5-10** applies – humble yourself and allow the Lord to lift you up! Do not be a Joab seeking a "main chance" by politics and game playing – be a David and walk with God, and so even after failing greatly, get up and walk again closer this time with the God who loves you. You will be led if you focus on the Lord, not people.

Jewish friends of mine believe they are able to trace their lineage back to one of David's older brothers, and they are very proud of this feat, especially as the majority of the birth/death records of the Temple were lost in 70 AD.

It is good to be able to "cite our lineage", and we are all able to do so in Hebrews 11, and that is the reason why Ezra notes this so carefully here. Spiritually it is vital that we can state our family connection – and assert our relationship with the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of the family likeness.

It will be vital that the records of families are laid out in the sacred text, for birth records to be checked for the son of Mary and the adopted son of Joseph, J'shua the Messiah! There was no doubt about the Lord being the legitimate "King of the Jews" from both sides of his family tree. All the critics were able to check out the family lineage and affirm that Jesus was indeed the legitimate "King" of the Jews.

Later in the first century when the Flavian Emperors were concerned about rebellion rising again in Judea the Emperor Domitian sent to find the relatives of Jesus to check that none of them were any threat. Descendants of Jude and James were found and all were found to be poor farmers – no threat to Rome.

**2:18 And Caleb the son of Hezron begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth: her sons are these; Jeshar, and Shobab, and Ardon. 19 And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur. 20 And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel. 21 And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was**

**threescore years old; and she bare him Segub. 22 And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead. 23 And he took Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath, and the towns thereof, even threescore cities. All these belonged to the sons of Machir the father of Gilead.**

## REFLECTION

Caleb is a true hero of faith in his work with Joshua when both men are around forty years of age. Both men had endured slavery in Egypt, and trained themselves in leadership under great adversity, so that they were ready to play their part in the Exodus, and their expertise as soldiers was such after a few months that they were the leaders, chosen as part of the twelve spies group. They were faith focused – seeing the land and the enemies as God saw things.

The definition of faith we have in **Hebrews 11:1-3**, reminds us that faith is the substance of what is hoped for, the evidence of what isn't seen yet, but is believed in the heart and mind, for the faith-centred believer sees all external things in terms of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit as to the Plan of God for their life. Caleb saw the giants and the high walls of cities as simply details in the plan of God that were God's worry not his own.

Our journey in EBCWA has been a journey in impossibility; we have never had enough money or resources to achieve any of the things that ended up being done, nor even seen the breadth, depth and scope of the Lord's Plan for us, before it unfolded and we walked into its joy and wonder. **Ephesians 3:18**. Read book 150 on the USB – "Providence and EBCWA" and stand amazed at God's work through us. It has been "Caleb like faith" all the way. We have seen doors open and in prayerfulness advanced through them, with our eyes open to what God was doing only, not what we could do.

Caleb saw giants as "pagan things" to be dispatched, not obstacles. One with God is always a majority, and he lived that dictum. Sadly he will fail in the end to fully conquer all the land, as will all the other tribal leaders, and he will relax in old age. One descendant, Nabal is truly a fool, and one, Jair, a hero-judge, but we are not judged by our grand-children, but by our own failure and success gained in God's strength. Whatever Caleb's failings, Ezra doesn't note them for they are forgiven, and so they are mentioned no-more forever. We are covered by this principle also. **Psalms 103:8-18** applies to all who love the Lord in spirit and in truth.

**2:24 And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephraim, then Abiah Hezron's wife bare him Ashur the father of Tekoa. 25 And the sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron were, Ram the firstborn, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, and Ahijah. 26 Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam. 27 And the sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel were, Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker. 28 And the sons of Onam were, Shammai, and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab and Abishur. 29 And the name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid. 30 And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children. 31 And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshan. And the children of Sheshan; Ahlai. 32 And the sons of Jada the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children.**

## REFLECTION

Hezron had taken a new wife at 60 years of age and died before the child to her was born, who would go on to be the father/founder of Tekoa. Several in this line have two wives, which we saw, for young Joseph and Samuel brought no joy. Polygamy is not recognized as God's standard, and Moses was clear in the Law that multiplying of wives was a sign of spiritual trouble in the nation, not the sign of blessing and prosperity. **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. At times a man would take additional wives after the death of the husbands of the others, and it was partly protective for the women, but also was a fast way to rebuild numbers if war had decimated populations.

While this is logical, Ezra is pushing us "behind the scenes and explanations". The only reason they needed to take two or more wives was because they were being judged by God in the first place, with shortage of men. Defeat in warfare was always a sign that there were significant spiritual things wrong in the nation. The Cycles of Divine Discipline were very fully laid out in **Leviticus 26**, and **Deuteronomy 28**.

The evidence that there is disobedience and spiritual compromise in the days of the men and women listed is seen in the men whose lines die out, while others have two wives to try to rebuild; each indicate judgment.



God was clear; there were conditions of spiritual life and obedience amongst the people that guaranteed blessing, and there were actions that would bring divine discipline.

Blessing = **Leviticus 26:3-13, Deuteronomy 28:1-14, 29:9-15.**

Cursing = **Leviticus 26:14-15, Deuteronomy 28:15-19, 29:16-29.**

1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle of Divine Discipline	Distress	<b>Leviticus 26:16-17</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle	Drought	<b>Leviticus 26:18-20</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle	Safety Gone	<b>Leviticus 26:21-22</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	Defeat in war	<b>Leviticus 26:23-26, Deut. 28:49ff</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> Cycle	Famine/Despair/Dispersion	<b>Leviticus 26:27-39, Deut. 28:63ff</b>

These words were very powerfully felt by Ezra, for he was working through the impact and lasting consequences on the nation of the Assyrian invasions/dispersion for the Northern Tribes, 722-701 BC, and then the Babylonian catastrophe, and exile/dispersion for the Southern Kingdom, 605-586 BC.

Ezra is writing around 440 BC, and he wants the people reading their genealogies to remember the cost to their ancestors personally of disobeying the words of Moses. He is, by listing these people, reminding them that the “words of Moses”, were the “Word of God” – and they apply forever. The “evil of unbelief” has temporal and eternal consequences. **Hebrews 3:12.**

He also wants them to reflect upon their recent recovery from Assyrian and Babylonian Exile, for it was a miraculous recovery and return, and was due to thorough repentance under Ezekiel. **Leviticus 26:40-46, Deuteronomy 30:1-20.** Ezra is also hit by the passages on these same cycles of discipline in Deuteronomy, where Moses is led by the Lord to go even further than the earlier Leviticus passage did.

**Deuteronomy 28** goes way further, well beyond the events of 605-535 BC under the Babylonians and Persians. It describes in detail things that did not happen in those years, but would happen in 70AD under the Romans, when after the fall of the city and temple, the slaves taken were sailed down to Egypt. **Deuteronomy 28:63-68.**

While the timetable was very clear in Daniel’s prophecy of the “70 weeks”, **Daniel 9:24-27**, and it is clear that Nehemiah’s rule as “Satrap of Judea” is the start of the time period. These two men worked together, and would have thoroughly discussed together Daniel’s prophetic words in light of the Persian decree to rebuild the walls in 445 BC. Ezra is deeply affected by the coming reality, that is so precisely prophesied, and wants the people warned in every way possible, so they are without excuse when they disobey again in the days of the Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry.

As we read the names of these people, we read of good and bad people, but all people who had a promise and a warning, and who many times in their history chose to disobey God and ignore the warnings of the certain consequences of rejecting God’s path. Jesus confronts us with the same choice. **Matthew 7:13-23, John 15:1-17.**

Will we be fruitful and be blessed, or disobey and be judged? We are here on this temporary earth for a limited time only, and we are here to play our part as God’s chosen people, with specific tasks to fulfil and specific blessings and eternal rewards on successful completion of them. Will we be blessed and fulfil our temporal and eternal destiny, or be robbed of our eternal rewards by foolish or stupid evil-sinful distractions? **1 Corinthians 3:8-14, Colossians 2:18, Hebrews 11:6.**

**2:33 And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth, and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel. 34 Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. 35 And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she bare him Attai. 36 And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad, 37 And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed, 38 And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah, 39 And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah, 40 And Eleasah begat Sisamai, and Sisamai begat Shallum, 41 And Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama.**

**REFLECTION**

Verse 34 reminds us that during the Exodus many Egyptian believers joined the march and left their homes, some as free men and women and some as the servants or bond-slaves of the wealthier Israelites.

Sheshan has no sons and so, when he spots the great character of his servant/slave, he frees and adopts this man, and marries him to his daughter and has sons to keep his family name alive through the Egyptian.

It is a reminder that salvation and obedience transform individuals and people groups, and that a slave can become a leader of all in God's place for their life. **Colossians 3:10-17**.

While the other names here cannot be tied to any people mentioned in the biblical record, they are God's people and their descendants have returned from Babylonian Exile and can "cite their genealogy" by reference to these men and women.

All have a part to play in the great unfolding drama of redemption, and whether it is as silver, gold, or clay pot, we have a destiny to fulfil. **2 Timothy 2:19-26**. Whatever our part to play, it can be played only in absolute obedience to the Lord and faithful following of His Word.

**2:42 Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel were, Mesha his firstborn, which was the father of Ziph; and the sons of Mareshah the father of Hebron. 43 And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema. 44 And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shammai. 45 And the son of Shammai was Maon: and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. 46 And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazez. 47 And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. 48 Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah. 49 She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibeaz: and the daughter of Caleb was Achsa. 50 These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the firstborn of Ephratah; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim. 51 Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader. 52 And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, and half of the Manahethites. 53 And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; of them came the Zareathites, and the Eshtaulites, 54 The sons of Salma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites. 55 And the families of the scribes, which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.**

## REFLECTION

Caleb's family formed a widely spread and close-knit web of cities on the borders of Judah. He fought the Midianite and other invader-raiders at times, and sadly his descendants didn't support David in the wilderness consistently. The Ziphites betrayed him even though he protected them against the Philistines. **1 Samuel 23:5-24**.

The sadness of this section is seeing that even Caleb succumbed to sexual temptation and had two "concubines" (lovers who were recognized as de-facto wives over time and their children considered to be legitimate). This is however a reminder that the children of adultery, while treated as "illegitimate/bastards" by some, were not seen that way by God. Read texts below.

The Law of the "Four Generation Curse" in **Exodus 20:5** is not read closely enough by those who seek to blame children for their father's/mother's sins. Even in Jesus' day there were those who thought they could assign blame for blindness and deformity on parent's sins, and Jesus corrected them. **John 9:1-5**.

The Law was very clear, that each person was to be judged for their own attitudes and personal sins only. No child was ever to be judged as guilty of anything because of their parent's sinful or evil actions. All stand before the Lord alone, for judgment or rewards, according to their own faith choices.

Read in sequence the following to underline this, and remember all these texts were before Ezra as he records these genealogies. **Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Chronicles 25:4, Proverbs 30:11-16, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Ezekiel 18:4, 20-21**.

The founding fathers of Bethlehem and Kirjath-jearim are noted here, and these places will play their important parts in redemptive history through the centuries. The other group that testify to grace and righteousness through the years are the family of the Kenites, an Arab tribal group that attaches to Israel, and is blessed through the centuries. Their descendants the Rechabites stood for righteousness when Israelites were turning away. **Jeremiah 35:1-19**. It is belief that behaves righteously that alone is to determine any value assigned to God's people, not birth, wealth, power or influence.

## APPLICATION

[a] Personal

Persistent Sin will stop you in your tracks in this life, or repentance and godly life-change will free you to live as God intended. Will we have life as God intended and an eternal destiny of blessing with God's people, or will we trade eternity for short term sinful pleasures in time?

Every generation must take its stand against spiritual compromise, or they will slide downhill. We must each see that God's Word is to be more real to us than our own visible reality. God's Word is to be our guide, or we will be deceived by things that the enemy can use to distract us from our true path in this very short life.

Take your place believer and play your part in time for eternal reward with blessing forever. Stand with your godly ancestors in faith in Hebrews 11, and hear their encouraging cries from the stands of heaven, as you take your stand in the truth once delivered to the saints. God's Word stands forever, so stand upon and within it, and hear the shouts of joy in the stands of heaven! **Hebrews 12:1-3.**

### **[b] Pastoral**

Our theme is to be, "Hope in the Lord's Person and Work". There is forgiveness and forgetting of sin in the Lord's grace and mercy and love. **Psalm 103:8-18** applies forever! No guilt is ever to be used as a tool for control of believers in any church. We are to be a guilt free group, for the Lord has set us free when we come before him for forgiveness.

"Choose Life!" is another great theme of Ezra in Chronicles, for he reminds us in these lists of people that some were "also-ran", "might have been", or "could have been". So many die with regrets that they didn't throw themselves into a path that would have borne good fruit. It can be timidity, fear, self-doubt, or sin that stops us living as we are called to, but they are all poor and pathetic excuses.

In the filling of the Holy Spirit there is NO REASON we can offer for not doing what the Lord's path calls us to do. We have the eternal plan, we have the Spirit's power and we have the fellowship of the Lord – let us advance into the plan and see God open the door to our true destiny!

Express faith and move forward in God's power, or disable yourself by doubt. Let power and purpose grow in the plan of God for your life, or let doubt grow to form a useless and wasted life. Let us warn God's people daily! We opt for truth daily, or we select disaster eventually! **Deuteronomy 30:19-20.**

Will we be plotters and schemers like Joab, or people of grace-faith-rest like David? David failed, but his greatness is seen in that he gets up and keeps walking forward in God's power and plan, knowing that he will receive God's provision for the road ahead. Caleb and Joshua saw the promises of God as bigger and more powerful than the giants in the land! Do we?

As pastors we are challenged by the accuracy of God's prophetic words here. 27% of the Scripture was a prophetic word when written, and yet so many avoid the prophetic passages as "divisive". Let us not avoid passages that baffle superficial students, but be true pastor-teachers and study the Word thoroughly.

Note the words below that we used to preface the Prophetic Update books for the years 2005-2022.

### **"CHALLENGES FROM THE PAST**

***"About the time of the end a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attentions to the Prophecies and insist upon their literal interpretation in the midst of much clamour and opposition".***  
Sir Isaac Newton [1642-1727].

Whilst Newton's words are not a Biblical prophecy it has been a reality in this generation as many Christians have seen the correlation of a large number of Biblical Prophecies regarding the Second Coming of Christ and a wide range of events coming together literally in our time.

The English founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley writes in his notes on Romans:

***"So many prophecies refer to this grand event [of the restoration of Israel], that it is surprising any Christian can doubt of it. And these are greatly confirmed by the wonderful preservation of the Jews as a distinct people to this day. When it is accomplished, it will be so strong a demonstration, both of***

the Old and New Testament revelation, as will doubtless convince many thousand Deists, in countries nominally Christian.”

“I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel”. C H Spurgeon, [1855].

***“It is high time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecy by the light of prophecies already fulfilled. The curses on the Jews were brought to pass literally: so also will be the blessings. The scattering was literal: so also will be the gathering, The pulling down of Zion was literal: so also will be the building up. The rejection of Israel was literal: so also will be the restoration.”*** Bishop J C Ryle Bishop of Liverpool. [1867]

Both Spurgeon and Ryle wrote well before the Zionist movement began. Whilst it is true that in the age of Grace in the Church we have neither Gentile nor Jew, but the Church of God, the Bible clearly states that God has not finished with the race He created, Israel. Bishop Ryle here is saying that prophecies regarding the judgment of Israel have equal value to prophecies regarding the future blessings for Israel, including the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews to rule over the world from Jerusalem.

***“Knowledge of biblical prophecy qualifies all Christian life and service. By it the believer comes to know the faithfulness of God to His Word. Many tasks which Christians undertake would not be assumed if God’s program and its future aspects were better known. He has given no commission to convert the world, and enterprises that are based on that sort of idealism are without His authority. Likewise, the knowledge of prophecy yields poise to the believer in times of crisis, as well as comfort in times of sorrow.”*** 1 Thessalonians 4:18, John 17:17, 1John 3:3. L S Chafer – Introduction to Eschatology – Systematic Theology Volume IV page 261.

Whatever finally occurs, and the order of events, is in the Lord's hands, not ours. After fifty years of study we believe the pre-tribulation view correct, but with humility, as our eyes are on Jesus not the Rapture, nor are we arrogantly assured of our conclusions after serious study about what we believe to be the sequence of events. Let's agree that good people differ on this, and focus on the one thing the Communion Service tells us to affirm - He is victor over sin and death and we celebrate that fact ... "Until HE Comes". When He comes, we won't be looking at each other saying, "See I was right..." We will be solely focused on Jesus. Let's keep that focus now while agreeing that there are various ways this could occur. Our point in this book is very clear - whatever the final sequence of events - the Bible appears to be saying to us that the start of the sequence is not far away – let's get busy and let's get people into the Word - and listening to the Lord.

Ezra is very clear about the future dangers to Israel and he is recording things to support his daily preaching to the people. He knows he faces a disobedient people, and they need to get things right while there is time! They must repent while it is still called “today”. **Hebrews 3:7-15, 4:7, 2 Corinthians 6:2, James 4:13.** We may not have tomorrow – all we have is opportunity today to obey and serve.

Will we be fruitful and blessed, or foolish and end up being pruned from the vine, due to our failure to do what we have been called to do?

## DOCTRINES

We have not put any of the Bible Topic Book doctrines into this book, and the reason is a unique one. This book, by its emphasis, draws attention to all the great doctrines of Systematic Theology. It would increase the size of the book in Megabytes so as to be unable to be sent through the internet.

Our decision is to keep you referring back to the Commentaries on the days of Joshua, the Judges, Samuel and the Kings, as the doctrines that are most relevant are all there. Chronicles is written as the late/last commentary on the works of the authors who wrote Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, and we need to keep those books open as we go through the things that Ezra emphasizes and spot the things he leaves out, for there are reasons for all said, and all not said.

Chronicles is a book, not unlike the Gospel of John, written well after events, as a deep reflection upon events, and with the same emphasis that John gives by the extensive use of the Greek perfect tense of the verbs he selects. The perfect tense draws attention to the eternal flow on of the action of the verb. Ezra is constantly drawing attention to the eternal flow on consequences of the choices made in time, and he is challenging his own generation to “do better” in God’s power than their ancestors often did!

Let us heed the “Application Points” at the end of each chapter, and so hear louder and louder in our ears of faith, the shouts of acclamation from heaven from our spiritual ancestors, as they await our entry into eternity, after our brief walk through space-time. Let us walk closely with Jesus, in the filling of the Holy Spirit and so fulfil our temporal destiny and by so doing, find our eternal place of blessing.

### **CHAPTER 3**

**3:1 Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: 2 The third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith: 3 The fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. 4 These six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5 And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel: 6 Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, 7 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine.**

#### **REFLECTION**

Sadly, David reaps what he sowed in the carnal realm of sex; a brood of mainly useless children who apart from a few, achieved nothing other than being wastes of space and killers of others, although some may have been quiet achievers... After the Great Rebellion of Absalom, David doesn't appoint any of his sons to rulership, even though many are well into their forties, clearly because he cannot – they are not up to the task. Good genetics is nothing without hard work, and good character from spiritual growth, and a daily habit of Holy Spirit control.

Samuel also faced this problem, and he tried to get his sons involved, but corruption and evil was the result. **1 Samuel 8:1-3.** The truth that God has no grand-children, and that each generation must stand alone before God is seen clearly in Samuel and David's family dynamics. Amnon is a rapist, **2 Samuel 13:1ff**, Daniel apparently a nobody, Absalom a murderer and rebel, **2 Samuel 13-18**, Adonijah a pathetic plotter against Solomon, **1 Kings 1:5ff.**

It is intriguing that Bathsheba's brood of four may be the best of the bad bunch! She gives birth to Solomon, who starts well, although not finishing well. She also appears to give birth to Nathan, who is to be the son through whom Mary will descend, and the son who will bring in the Messiah, even though in his own life time, he appears to have done little of note (that is noted here – wait till heaven for judgment). **Luke 3:31.**

I must add hastily here, that although these men listed are the “also-rans” of Ezra's history, they may have done amazing things, just not recorded in the Scripture. Each has possibly played their part in the drama, it was just not a part that the world noticed, but God notices all the parts played, and the destiny of the players is in His hands forever. For eternal blessing or eternal judgment, we each play our part on this earth.

We need to reflect that we may be on the earth for one specific action that is crucial for the plan of God, and if we do this one thing, we may have done all that was required! It's not quantity of time, but quality of obedient and very specific production that matters in God's plan.

It is only in heaven that we will find out what each of these men did, and realise how great some of these women were. Bathsheba gets a bad press, as a seducer, who was very willing to be part of David's sin of lust, but we must revise our viewpoint here, for it is her two sons who are the key to Messiah's coming.

**3:9 These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister. 10 And Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abia his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, 11 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12 Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, 13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14 Amon his son, Josiah his son. 15 And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16 And the sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son.**

#### **REFLECTION**

Here is the line of kings, as discussed in the books of Kings, and these men will be individually discussed below in this Chronicles account, from the spiritual perspective. Ezra will discuss their lives and actions, and

will weave all the strands together to demonstrate that they prosper or fall depending on the same principles seen from Seth, Shem, and Moses onwards; by their obedience to the revealed will and words of God.

Looking at these men's names we can reflect upon the glory they experienced in their lives and the power they wielded. They could cast a look at a man and their servants would execute that man on the spot, and yet they often failed to exercise control over themselves, and lived like Eastern Potentates, with vast harems, rather than godly men in obedience to Moses clear instructions. **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. Every order was broken by nearly all these men, and yet they were baffled that they were judged!

Ezra is clear in his assessment of these kings, and before he begins his and Nehemiah's story, he notes the reasons they all fail to deliver on the promise they had in their succession. They failed to obey and stand in humility before God, like David did. David sinned, but confessed and was always ready to be rebuked and corrected, even by evil men like Joab! 2 Samuel 19:1ff. Ezra spells the truth out bluntly – sinful rebellion against God's clearly revealed instructions leads to the Babylonian Exile. **2 Chronicles 36:14-21**.

**3:17 And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son, 18 Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. 19 And the sons of Pedaiah were, Zerubbabel, and Shimei: and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister: 20 And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushabhesed, five. 21 And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jesaiah: the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah. 22 And the sons of Shechaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23 And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three. 24 And the sons of Elioenai were, Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Dalaiah, and Anani, seven.**

## REFLECTION

We move here to the names of people that Ezra may have known, and certainly knew of personally, for they lived in the 100 years before his rule and Nehemiah's as satraps under the Persian Empire. These are the men and women of the Exile and the years thereafter. They faced the consequences of their parent's paganism and rebellion against the Law of Moses, and faced it in their own slavery by the Rivers of Babylon. **Psalms 137:1ff**.

Ezra met some of these people, indeed some were his companions as they returned from Babylon. **Ezra 8:1-11**. Some were the ones he had to deal with in his administration, and that of Nehemiah as they built the walls back and repaired the gates after over 100 years of neglect. Compare the names here to those in **Ezra Chapters 1-2**, and with the names of shame in **Ezra 10**, and also check out the names in **Matthew Chapter 1**, as this is the line of Joseph.

The grandsons of Zerubbabel, Pelatiah, Jesaiah, are most likely Ezra's contemporaries, but unlike their grand-father they were not "Satrap Material", and so did not rule, but had to respond to Nehemiah and Ezra's leadership. It is the reminder that just because grand-father was a pastor, you don't need to think that is your call, unless the Holy Spirit makes it clear that it is! Each must walk their own path in this life without any sense of "entitlement"; each is to listen to the Holy Spirit and obey..... "Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy/blessed in Jesus but to trust and obey..."

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

We each are called to play our part in the "unfolding drama of redemption", and that part may appear to be as minor as the man carrying a tent peg for the tabernacle in the days of the Exodus.

Just like the Exodus days, each person had and has a part to play, and it is playing that God assigned part that wins eternal reward.

It is not the apparent worth of a role that leads to eternal rewards, but our own percentage of "filling up our call" and living to 100% capacity that decides what we receive forever. It is not that pastors win more eternal rewards than others, for each are called to serve in different parts of the angelic conflict, and each must play our part for the victory of the Lord to be followed up each day in more victory.

It is our walking in the Holy Spirit's power that wins eternal rewards, not our title or status on earth. We think many of these names are "also-rans", just links in a chain, but they may be far more, and only in heaven will we hear their stories as they will hear, or have already seen ours. **Hebrews 12:1-3**. The old Celts used to say, "Let us live daily so as to be worthy of a song". It is a good saying!

### [b] Pastoral

Let us remember to challenge all God's people to play their called part, and to walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit so that they see, understand and receive the strength to play their God assigned part.

God's principles for temporal and eternal blessings have not changed through the centuries, only the way we speak of them has changed. God lays out His requirements clearly in the Scriptures and we are simply to move into the Word, open our heart to the Holy Spirit's ministries and be obedient, and we will find the blessed path. It will always be the thorn surrounded mountain pass (**Matthew 7:13-23**) but it will be the place of power and destiny.

### Notes

## CHAPTER 4

**4:1 The sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal. 2 And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath; and Jahath begat Ahumai, and Lahad. These are the families of the Zorathites. 3 And these were of the father of Etam; Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash: and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi: 4 And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephratah, the father of Bethlehem. 5 And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. 6 And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hephher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. 7 And the sons of Helah were, Zereth, and Jehoar, and Ethnan.**

### REFLECTION

Keil and Delitzsch discuss these names very fully, and it is clear from this discussion and others about these names, that Ezra is working from written genealogical lists that are in front of him, and he is doing it in a Jewish manner, where "sons of" is a loose term. We have already seen earlier in chapter 2 that Pharez is the son of Judah, but the others are grand-children, or even further away in connection, but are named for Pharez and recognized as such.

We are apt to think of genealogy as a fixed generation by generation list of names without any interruption, but that is not the Jewish, or ancient world, connection process. They connected people by their significance, and people would be missed out of a genealogy if they were not important enough, or didn't serve the greater purpose. A cousin could be even construed as a "son of" someone if they were considered as "sons" by the people involved.

Association is by impact, work done, or fame won. The real association that Ezra is interested in is the faith-association, where believers are focused on the Lord, and doing what they are on the planet to do! Don't try to sort the various lists out, nor reach for the "textual or scribal error", to explain problems.

The thinking of these people is just very different to our own, and connections are being laid out here that made sense to those of Ezra's day and he has formalized them here. These lists made the people feel they belonged to the family that genetically went back to Judah, and they felt their tribal identity in that tribe.

**4:8 And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum. 9 And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless**

**me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.**

## REFLECTION

“The prayer of Jabez” has great power for some, although we have always found it a weak and hesitant prayer and I have wondered why people would pray this regularly today, although I have been encouraged by it at a crucial time. A great friend of mine always did pray this prayer, and he was mightily used by God to provide for missions, by business success he gained millions and gave it away secretly to missions over many years, so that only at his funeral many discovered the full impact of his lifelong work.

He wanted a quiet life to make the money (expand his coasts – business interests), so that he could pour more out to missions and didn't want anything evil to interfere and hinder that pouring process. One great giver once said, “I just shovel my money out to God's work, and God shovels it back to me, and over the years I have discovered God has a bigger shovel than mine!”

My experience of the three men who I have known who prayed the prayer of Jabez is that they believed they were on earth to pour out their substance for mission work, and they did so, and the Lord truly answered their prayer, protected their money flow so that it seriously flowed outwards for all their lives and many ministries were blessed. It is not a prayer for pastors, for we are called to be in dangerous places and endure losses at times, but it may be a great prayer for mission supporters, who need peace and quiet to “fly under the devil's radar”, to make the money in order to give it away to missions!

**4:11 And Chelub the brother of Shuah begat Mehir, which was the father of Eshton. 12 And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Rechah. 13 And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah: and the sons of Othniel; Hathath. 14 And Meonothai begat Ophrah: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charashim; for they were craftsmen. 15 And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz. 16 And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asareel. 17 And the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Ephraim, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18 And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19 And the sons of his wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20 And the sons of Shimon were, Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were, Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth. 21 The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea, 22 And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And these are ancient things. 23 These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.**

## REFLECTION

We do not have the connections that provide the links of these people back to Judah, but the people of the time did. Don't spend time worrying about this, for the saved people behind the names will explain it all to you in heaven. The great thing for me about these names is their strangeness to our eyes and the fact that real people expressing our common faith are recorded here, and we will meet them and we have eternity (beyond space and time restraints) to get to know our brethren. Some wonder what they will do in heaven, but when you read these lists, understand just how many interesting believers have lived, and they are all your eternal family. There is amazing fellowship with amazing people awaiting us in heaven.

Othniel we know from Judges, as one of the deliverers, but we know little of this man's deeds over many years, but we will in heaven. Judges 3:9ff. We have craftsmen mentioned in verse 14, reminding us that these people all had to earn their living. Like most of us they didn't and couldn't sit around all day thinking and reflecting; they had to fit in their spiritual life around paying their bills and providing for families. Paul, who worked as a tent maker to support himself and others had no time for those who were too super-spiritual to work! **1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.**

We have a really intriguing story in the “daughter of Pharaoh” that one family member “took”; verse 18. This is a staggering detail that was obviously well known at the time and all spoke of it, (there is a movie here...) but we no longer have the details, and must wait until heaven. There are a number of craftsmen mentioned, from weavers of fine linen to the potters.



The little detail Ezra notes is that they lived in the midst of hedges and plants on the king's land. This is explainable – as potters need plentiful wood supplies for firing kilns and they need to channel winds for maximum effect – hence the hedges. They would also be surrounded by specific plants for colouring and glazing the clay, and also as gardens for family eating.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

We are challenged by these passages not to waste time on questions to which there are no answers until we meet the people in heaven. We will meet these people and we have eternity to enjoy their company. Let's enjoy reflecting upon them and their lives, and smile as we focus on our own lives and work, so that from heaven these people can rejoice in the battles won for the Lord.

### [b] Pastoral

Always remind God's people pastor that we each have that different call on our life and finances. Jabez was an "under the radar" businessman, and some need to work this way, quietly, so that the enemy overlooks them until too late. We forget that Satan is not all knowing and he doesn't notice the "small fry" believer, and may not see how crucial their work is.

**4:24 The sons of Simeon were, Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul: 25 Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26 And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son. 27 And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters: but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah. 28 And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazar-shual, 29 And at Bilhah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad, 30 And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag, 31 And at Beth-marcaboth, and Hazarsusim, and at Beth-birei, and at Shaaraim. These were their cities unto the reign of David. 32 And their villages were, Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities: 33 And all their villages that were round about the same cities, unto Baal. These were their habitations, and their genealogy. 34 And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshah, the son of Amaziah, 35 And Joel, and Jehu the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel, 36 And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Asaiah, and Adiel, and Jesimiel, and Benaiah, 37 And Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah; 38 These mentioned by their names were princes in their families: and the house of their fathers increased greatly. 39 And they went to the entrance of Gedor, even unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40 And they found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable; for they of Ham had dwelt there of old. 41 And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because there was pasture there for their flocks. 42 And some of them, even of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. 43 And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.**

## REFLECTION

Simeon will be hammered as a tribe, and finally they will be absorbed into Judah, verse 27 above. Due to his sin as a patriarch, he was judged, and his descendants were going to find their destiny, not in their own strength and power, but in that of Judah. **Genesis 34:25ff, 49:5-7.** They will however be there in the end, and 12,000 from their genetic line will stand as witnesses for Messiah's second return. **Revelation 7:7.** They are absorbed into Judah for safety, but they will be identified as a separate tribe at some point in the near future, and they will stand before the Lord in the Millennial kingdom as their own inheritance. DNA analysis was already being used by 2019 to identify the Jewish tribes as separate entities, and will advance in the next few years to be very specific.

Ezra identifies some of their wanderings, and the places and details are lost to us today, but he records the great doings of some of the remnant of Simeon, who led their groups into new pastures, where some were killed but others had prospered, "unto this day".

In the 440s BC the tribe still had pockets independently living as herdsmen in the land of the Edomites, and may have mixed into the Arab peoples there over time. The later Idumeans, descended from Edom will be fierce defenders with the zealots against the Romans in 66-71 AD, and maybe they have a shared heritage – we cannot be sure. Was the cruel line of the Herodian kings part Simeon?

Ezekiel sees his visions well after they were absorbed into Judah, with a remnant scattered to the north, and also well after both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, and yet he sees that they will inherit their portion in the land. **Ezekiel 48:1-20**. God is not finished with Israel, and is not finished with the twelve tribes of Israel, for they have their greatest time in space-time history to run yet – the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth. **Revelation 20**.

#### **APPLICATION**

##### **[a] Personal**

John the Baptist summed up the truth well when he said of Jesus, “He must increase, I must decrease”. **John 3:30**. As a tribe these people realised that their strength was to come by being bound to Judah, from whence would come the Messiah. We are to bind ourselves to the King and the King’s people, no matter what their people group origin. No racial or cultural barrier is to separate us from those who worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. **John 4:23-24**. There is never to be superiority or inferiority in the Lord’s family.

##### **[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, let us be clear from the revelation of the Word of God, that Israel has risen to nationhood for a reason in these last days. There are no accidents in history, and we have our part to play before being removed from this earth, but Israel still has her greatest destiny to be fulfilled, and still has both her worst and her best days to come. Let us not be caught looking foolish before God at His coming for His church.

#### **Notes**

## CHAPTER 5

**5:1** Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. **2** For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:) **3** The sons, I say, of Reuben the firstborn of Israel were, Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. **4** The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, **5** Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son, **6** Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away captive: he was prince of the Reubenites. **7** And his brethren by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned, were the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, **8** And Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo and Baal-meon: **9** And eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates: because their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead. **10** And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east land of Gilead. **11** And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan unto Salcah: **12** Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in Bashan. **13** And their brethren of the house of their fathers were, Michael, and Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven. **14** These are the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz; **15** Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers. **16** And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders. **17** All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

## REFLECTION

Ezra immediately reminds us all of the spiritual principles that operated to modify the standard genealogy here. It was recognized by Jacobs "blessing" over his sons, for the truth had changed things, and the truth is, "Be sure your sins will find you out..." **Genesis 49:1-4**. Moses then blesses the tribe at the end of the Exodus journey, **Deuteronomy 33:6**. Another principle is working out here also, the principle of forgiveness and the bringing of good from evil, as people devote themselves to the will of God for their lives. **Romans 8:28-39**.

Reuben will be blessed as they accept the role of Judah in leadership, and the Messiah who comes from Judah. They will one day, and they will enter the Millennial Kingdom and inherit the land. Reuben had stayed on the East Bank of Jordan.

Ezra tells us the name of the chief of their tribe, verse 6, who was defeated with his people and they went into captivity with the Assyrians in 720 BC, but that wasn't the end of them. They are back and the names of their people are noted. This reminds us that there are no "lost ten tribes", for some were back in Ezra's day, as the Persian Empire gave them right of return. Some have only come back in recent years.

## APPLICATION

**[a] Personal**

Reuben didn't cross the river and so enter the true "promised land". They never had the full blessing that they could have had, and nor were they there to stand with their brethren. They got what they wanted and what they saw was good for their life style, but never fully advanced into the will of God for them. Are we content to be comfortable, rather than fully follow through on God's will for our life?

**[b] Pastoral**

No guilt is ever to be preached by God's servants, for after confession there is forgiveness and no guilt is appropriate when God has forgiven. **Psalms 103:8-18**. Reuben failed and fell into captivity, as all the others did also, but the "remnant of faith" were restored.

Let us always remind God's people that we live, move and have our being in God's power alone. We only survive and prosper in any ministry in God's power, purpose and plan. Reuben also teaches us that while we live there is hope. Let us preach God's "good news" of forgiveness and restoration, for there are many who drift away and need to hear God again before it is too late for them.

**5:18** The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. **19** And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. **20** And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him. **21** And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. **22** For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

### REFLECTION

We don't know when this great battle was fought, and it reminds us of how much of the history of the tribes under the Judges and afterwards is lost by the time of the Captivity. Moses records a book he may be the author of, "The Book of the Wars of the Lord", but it is lost. **Numbers 21:14**. The victory was a great one and gave the tribe of Reuben control of the East Bank until the "Captivity".

There are two reasons to be sure this is the most recent Babylonian Captivity (605-535). Firstly, given the men's names written after verse 6 when the Assyrians are mentioned, it must be the Babylonian Captivity. Secondly, from Ezra's perspective the captivity is the one he has been part of returning the people from. It is the reminder also that many came back from the northern ten tribes also at this time, even though the Assyrians had sent them to the far-flung corners of their Empire in 720 BC. Persia now controlled all these areas and allowed return, but as we will see below few from amongst the East Bank tribes returned.

The key reason for defeat by God's people is disobedience, and the key reason for victory is obedience. In verse 20 Ezra lays the truth out – they won because they were helped – they were helped by God. Unless we are helped by God we fail in the battles of men. **Psalms 9:10, 20:7-9, 27:11**.

Our path must be God's path through this world, for we are not able to see our way through space-time into eternity. We are destined for eternity, and so only God's Plan, followed day by day can bring us to the place of victory here and blessing forever.

### APPLICATION

#### [a] Personal

God will guide your path. **Isaiah 58:11**. **Proverbs 3:1-7**. God alone can direct our path through the world of space-time, for He alone is beyond this universe, as its creator, and knows the path that will lead us safely home to eternity. **Jeremiah 10:23, Jude 23-25**.

#### [b] Pastoral

**Isaiah 45:6-13, 55:8-11** are to be our often repeated messages to God's people. **Psalms 119:35, 105**. God's path alone keeps us safe through this life as we walk in the light of the Word of God. Let us keep warning people of the dangers of trusting in self, rather than trusting in God.

**5:23** And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon. **24** And these were the heads of the house of their fathers, even Ephraim, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, and heads of the house of their fathers. **25** And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. **26** And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

### REFLECTION

This tribe also didn't cross over Jordan and join their brethren on the other side. They were both still within all the land that Abraham saw and was promised, and that David and Solomon would later control, and also that will be Israel's in the Millennium, but they were supposed to be with their brethren, and so were under the "permissive will" of God, rather than the directive will. Their land was at times, and will be for the Millennium, Israel's land, but they were called to "cross over" and stay together with their brethren, and they paid a price for that through the next 1000 years.

This tribe, with Gad, and much of Reuben, were taken to Assyrian captivity in 720 BC, and while some have returned by Ezra's day, most apparently did not. Ezra is able to be sure of their location, for the areas mentioned were under Persian control and as a present or past Satrap/Ruler of a Province, Ezra is in a position to find out details of what has happened to the various groups, and I cannot help feeling that he may have done something to try to get them to return. Ask him in heaven about this...

The reason for their captivity is spiritual adultery/apostasy. They followed the very gods/demons who the previous people worshipped. If these "gods" (actually demonic forces – **Leviticus 17:7, 32:17, Deuteronomy 32:17**) couldn't deliver their own people from the Israelites, why would these fools think they would deliver them? God's Word rightly mocks idolatry, for it is pathetic for a man to make his own god and worship it, but it is beyond foolish, it is fatal. **Isaiah 40:18-20, 44:9-20, 46:5-13, Jeremiah 10:1-15.**

The passages here are worth looking up, for the Bible is clear, that behind every "god/goddess" statue is a demonic force, inferior to God, but fatally destructive for the people who are stupid enough to follow after them. The séances and other necromancy were forbidden to God's people from the beginning, for they are fooling around in areas where deception is to be expected, for those deceived by such paganism are open to demonic deception.

The demons are still active in the world and hate us as Satan their master does, and so let us not be surprised when demonic religious activity destroys people groups! The religious evils of the demonic always will destroy! **James 4:7-10** applies all through the Church Age! Satan doesn't build, he only destroys and so do his people. Sadly, these tribal groups refused to come back to the land when able to return at Ezra's time, and some have only returned in recent decades or years. Just in 2017 the Bene Menesh (Most likely tribe of Manasseh) have returned from the Thai and Indian border regions where they have ended up after Assyria and Persia fell, and so they have been in dispersal for 2700 years!

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

The fate of these people groups of Israel reminds us that God's "Directive Will" is always better than his "Permissive Will". God's will has space and timing elements in it for each of us. There is a place to be and a right time to be there, and God wants us exactly in the right place at the right time to achieve maximum impact and blessing.

Let's be prayerful as to positioning in our world, but also let's be sure to avoid the paganism that surrounds us, like the plague it is. There is no compromise with evil; for Satan doesn't do compromise, for he wants your destruction. You cannot put a bad apple together with a good one, without the bad rotting the good over time.

How many young believers are brought to moral hurt or destruction, and at times even death, because they lacked discernment about the true nature of evil, and entered into places or relationships that destroyed them.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, have you taught the "Angelic Conflict" recently to the Lord's people under your care? Are God's people under your "under-shepherd" care ready for the enemy's attacks? Is there good knowledge within each of them about the risks, real threats, and real actions to take to keep safe?

Do God's people know about the demonic presence within each idol, or are they visiting pagan temples on holiday, or accepting invitations to local temples in their home town, without awareness of the angelic forces behind these places?

While **1 John 4:4** applies where-ever a Holy Spirit filled believer goes, there are places to avoid, and there are people who cannot be witnessed to without danger that must be seen in advance, and prayed through.

God's Word is very clear, frighteningly clear about our pastoral responsibility on these matters. **Ezekiel 3:16-27**. We are the Lord's "watchmen", and if we blow the trumpet and are ignored, the responsibility rests upon the person who rejects, but if we have not blown the trumpet to warn, the Lord holds us responsible!

Have any of the youth group entered the drug world under your watch? If you warned and taught about it, you are not guilty, for their own spirit of rebellion led them into danger, but if you have not taught the deviousness of the demonic you are guilty of their blood and the Lord will judge you.

## Notes

## CHAPTER 6

**6:1** The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. **2** And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. **3** And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. **4** Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua, **5** And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi, **6** And Uzzi begat Zerariah, and Zerariah begat Meraioth, **7** Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, **8** And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz, **9** And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan, **10** And Johanan begat Azariah, (he it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem:) **11** And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, **12** And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum, **13** And Shallum begat Hilkiyah, and Hilkiyah begat Azariah, **14** And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak, **15** And Jehozadak went into captivity, when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

## REFLECTION

What a stellar cast of men is listed here. Only a few of them are known to us by name, but they have a significant spiritual impact in their lives. We will discuss the later men as we go through later chapters and we will see Ezra's assessment of them then, but the early men are an education in their work; both for spiritual power and abject failure.

In Leviticus 10 we read of the presumption, stupidity and blasphemy of Nadab and Abihu. What were they thinking? All they had to do was obey the Law as their Uncle Moses had been given it by God himself, and yet they disobeyed. Aaron had buckled under pressure and made the golden calf and led compromised semi-pagan worship, and two of his sons proved themselves equally flaky later. **Exodus 32:1ff, Deuteronomy 9**.

Was it lack of respect towards Moses, the younger brother, who Aaron found it hard to accept as his leader, especially as it was Aaron who did the speaking, or just a temporary insanity/jealousy? Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for his new wife, the Ethiopian woman, **Numbers 12**, and the Lord seriously judged them both. Aaron and his two older sons teach us the importance of accepting God's plans, rather than our own, and accepting our place in the plan, not seeking to live other's lives.

Great and straight talking/acting men, like Phinehas, stand out; men who obeyed, and who felt the righteous anger of God towards evil and any compromise with it. We are reminded as we read this list, that the majority of people, in and out of the church, are still prepared to drift along and make compromises to "get along". These men show us the danger of "getting along" with others who will dilute truth and support compromise.

We remember the men not listed like fat old Eli and his evil sons, and the loss of the Ark due to their “lucky charm” type of religion. Religion without holiness and spiritual power is a faith going no-where except into judgment. Ezra’s point in this list is to remind us of the challenge of morality and the faith that works out in life to the glory of God. It is also a reminder that even a great father can have “sons of Belial”, and that each generation must face the truth, and decide will they accept God’s demands, or do they think they have better ideas?

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Do we make the message personal enough to keep ourselves on the straight and narrow path? **Matthew 7:13-23**. Nadab and Abihu are staggering in their evil stupidity, for they thought that God does not notice things that are forbidden! **Psalm 10**. God notices all that leads men and women away from His path and He hates sin, and we need to get His values in place within, not follow our own lower desires for wealth, fame, renown or worldly success.

Are we starting to drift away from fellowship with Jesus? Our faith is living because it is “In Him”, and any movement towards rituals and play acting is to be rejected. “Lucky Rabbit’s foot” type religion is for pagans, not believers; we are to simply, and in holiness, walk closer and closer with Jesus.

### [b] Pastoral

Do we speak bluntly enough to God’s people about the dangers of compromise? Acceptable service to the Lord is whole hearted obedient devotion of ourselves to God.

God wants us to get things right, and that means we are biblical, and holy in all our actions. Let us challenge ourselves in these matters. Holiness before the Lord is not an “optional extra, it is essential for acceptable service.

**1 Corinthians 3:17**. “...your body, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and it is to be holy...”

**Ephesians 1:4, 5:27**. “We should be holy and without blame....be holy and without blemish”

**1 Timothy 2:8**. “Lifting up holy hands, without wrath...”

**2 Timothy 1:9**. “He has called us with an holy calling....”

**1 Peter 1:16**. “Be holy for I am holy....”

**6:16** The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. **17** And these be the names of the sons of Gershom; Libni, and Shimei. **18** And the sons of Kohath were, Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. **19** The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. And these are the families of the Levites according to their fathers. **20** Of Gershom; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, **21** Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son. **22** The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, **23** Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Assir his son, **24** Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son, and Shaul his son. **25** And the sons of Elkanah; Amasai, and Ahimoth. **26** As for Elkanah: the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son, **27** Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. **28** And the sons of Samuel; the firstborn Vashni, and Abiah. **29** The sons of Merari; Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son, **30** Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son. **31** And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. **32** And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order.

## REFLECTION

Pause and read slowly through this list. We will pick up the later men in the story as Ezra will tell it, as it unfolds, but note how blessed Korah was by his family connection and birth. This was a man who had simply to fulfil his place in the plan of God to be blessed forever, but he rebelled against Moses, thinking, in his arrogant narcissistic self-confidence, that he was superior to Moses.

He and those who stood with him failed, but his son and those descended from him served with distinction, and the “Sons of Korah” were the singers of great songs for the temple services. Contrast the events of **Numbers 16**, with those of **Numbers 26**.

Refer also to the many Psalms that they sang. Their ungodly ancestor died the “sin unto death”, but the next generations were not judged for the foolishness of their father, but through their love and devotion to the Lord became worship leaders of the nation. **Psalms 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88**.

Read also of the godly Elkanah, and Hannah, and young Samuel in **1 Samuel 1**. This family will play their part in the great drama of redemption. They will be prayerful and Samuel will be the greatest of the Judges, but even he has difficulties as a parent, and his sons when they grow older become corrupt and defile the office of judge-priest-prophet. **1 Samuel 8**.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Fathers do not make sons; the son’s personal and accountable decisions make their own character! We are too influenced by psychology and by father-support-groups that have grown up in recent decades. We have influence over our children for good or bad, but each child, once they reach the age of accountability (age 20 according to **Numbers 14:29**) is held solely responsible for their choices by God.

God holds every individual responsible for their choices, whatever their backgrounds. God is absolutely fair and just in this, and we are challenged to see the truth here, for people with absolutely awful backgrounds make good choices, and children with great homes make evil ones. We are not to fall into sociological determinism, thinking that environments make certainties in adult outcomes – they do not. Only repeated bad choices make habits, and freely chosen bad habits alone make people go bad!

Samuel was surrounded by sexually immoral goings on, and yet he is not abused, as his focus as a boy is on the Lord, and he comes through the carnage around him. Eli was too tolerant and died of shock at something that should not have been a shock to him, for his own sloth and slackness had created the opportunity for the evil that unfolded.

Let us not blame, parents, environment or influences but hold to the biblical standard for judging behaviours; moral choices and accountable decisions. The loss of the Ark and its defilement by the Philistines occurred because of multiple national sins, and the sins were the same pagan compromises that had led to the loss of the temple later also. Ezra is going to explore this in the story as it unfolds, but these names remind us that so called “small moral decisions” can be the things that change nations and people-groups.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, let us be people who bring hope, but with truth ringing in people’s ears about the certain consequences of foolish actions. There is always hope while people live to repent and walk godly paths again, but they must walk them. We are responsible to make the truth plain and clear! **Ezekiel Chapter 3** is a lasting warning to all pastors.

**6:33 And these are they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel, 34 The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, 35 The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, 36 The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, 37 The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, 38 The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. 39 And his brother Asaph, who stood on his right hand, even Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimea, 40 The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah, 41 The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, 42 The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, 43 The son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi. 44 And their brethren the sons of Merari stood on the left hand: Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, 45 The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah, 46 The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, 47 The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi. 48 Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God.**



**REFLECTION**

These men were the administration group of the tabernacle, from moving it around, to ensuring all was ready for the priests to function within it. This form of ministry is often overlooked but the pastoral team cannot do their work if the administration of the building and all its functions do not flow smoothly. Those doing administration work well, will win greater rewards than the pastors, if they fulfil their task fully and the pastors do not do their work fully.

Remember, eternal rewards are not based on the status of the role, but on the percentage fulfilment of the tasks associated with the role assigned to each by God. The church cleaner may win more eternal rewards than the pastor if they were a 100% person in their loving devotion to their task, and the pastor was slack!

These families did “all manner of service” for the tabernacle. The readiness to be multi-tasked is a good indication of the service oriented person. Readiness to work hard and get one’s hands dirty is an essential aspect of true Christian work. Those not prepared to clean the church toilets shouldn’t expect to speak in the pulpit! We have spoken about Korah above, and we are reminded that those who cannot and will not serve in their assigned role are to be offered no other!

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Jesus made it clear that a servant heart was crucial for all who wished to work for his glory. Servant Leadership is what we have called it in our book on Pastoral Theology. **Matthew 16:24-28, 20:25-28, John 13:1-17, Ephesians 5:18-21.**

How is your “servant mental attitude” checking out believer? Is “others” your motto, or are you focused on yourself?

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, let’s check our attitudes out on this matter also. While it is frustrating if staff or volunteers don’t do a job well, we ought never to feel anger at a toilet floor that needs to be cleaned. When we cannot wipe up a mess the youth group have left behind, and worship with a smile, we have lost the servant attitude!

No job must be beneath us – wrap that towel around your waist pastor, and be ready to roll your sleeves up and work, with praise in your heart, not resentment – no task is beneath us. **John 13:1-17.**

**6:49 But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, and were appointed for all the work of the place most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50 And these are the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, 52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53 Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son. 54 Now these are their dwelling places throughout their castles in their coasts, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites: for theirs was the lot. 55 And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it. 56 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57 And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, namely, Hebron, the city of refuge, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir, and Eshtemoa, with their suburbs, 58 And Hilan with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs, 59 And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: 60 And out of the tribe of Benjamin; Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All their cities throughout their families were thirteen cities.**

**REFLECTION**

Aaron and his good sons were devoted to the work of the Tabernacle. Exodus 18, Numbers 18. Their role was to follow exactly the pattern of offerings that Moses had passed to them. Moses was told by God exactly what to do and how to do it, and he made notes on the mountain and then wrote it up into Exodus and Leviticus later. Aaron and his sons were obedient to the commands received, as from the Lord.

We are to do all things “as unto the Lord”. **Romans 12:11, 14:6-14, Colossians 3:16-24.**

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Let us test ourselves as to our mental attitude towards all tasks, but especially the frustrating ones. We are to do all things, in a spirit of worship – “as unto the Lord”. Let us practise this.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, is “servant leadership” our weekly theme? I am challenged by this every week, and I wonder whether we challenge the Lord’s people enough in this area on a regular basis.

**6:61 And unto the sons of Kohath, which were left of the family of that tribe, were cities given out of the half tribe, namely, out of the half tribe of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities. 62 And to the sons of Gershom throughout their families out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 63 Unto the sons of Merari were given by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 64 And the children of Israel gave to the Levites these cities with their suburbs. 65 And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, these cities, which are called by their names. 66 And the residue of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their coasts out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67 And they gave unto them, of the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount Ephraim with her suburbs; they gave also Gezer with her suburbs, 68 And Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, 69 And Aijalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: 70 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath. 71 Unto the sons of Gershom were given out of the family of the half tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, and Ashtaroth with her suburbs: 72 And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs, 73 And Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs: 74 And out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs, 75 And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: 76 And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs. 77 Unto the rest of the children of Merari were given out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs: 78 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan, were given them out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs, 79 Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: 80 And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 81 And Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.**

**REFLECTION**

The provision of land amongst all twelve tribes for the Levites and priests was mentioned earlier also, and we are reminded by Ezra that all the people were to support the workers at the tabernacle in their midst.

The cities of refuge are also recorded here, and were the reminder to the people of Ezra’s day that the system of justice laid down in the Mosaic Law had been meant to keep all safe, and have all people no more than a day’s walk from a Levitical Judge.

God cares about the provision of food for his people, and he prefers to have his people farm their own food and work for their food if they can, but also for God’s people to bless the ones who provide for them spiritually. “The labourer is worthy of his hire”, but Paul sets the pace for pastoral service, with his tent making. **Luke 10:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 1 Timothy 5:18.** He receives full salary/expenses only when he is under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial.

God also cares for the provision of justice in the land. The cities of refuge were there to ensure no-one was killed for any crime they did not commit by an enraged mob that just wanted blood and any blood would do! Mob rule was never to guide Israel. God’s provisions are thoughtful, and His Law good always, and we are to heed the instructions of God’s Word and work justice and righteousness in all we do. These men listed above, and their children worked quietly and hard to provide for themselves, receiving gifts of support at times, but they were ready to be “labourers” for the Lord.

**APPLICATION**

**[a] Personal**

Are we “labouring” for the Lord, or could some consider us to be “lazy in the Lord”? For sadly many pastors are not working to feed the Lord’s people, and they act as if they are on their own time all the time. Are we “buying up the time”, **Ephesians 5:16**, or wasting precious moments on things of no eternal value.

Do we care for justice? What goes as “social justice” in our modern world is often not biblical justice at all, but our rejection of the fake must not make us reject the true demand for standing up for the genuinely needy and assisting those who have received ill treatment for their faith around the world. We are surrounded by calls for “social justice” but often what is meant is supporting drug addicts in their addiction without life change, or supporting a criminal, when no-one stands with their victims! Let’s be discerning, but let’s be 100% biblical, and that means we are holy, and gospel message centred, not distracted by politics, fame, or being witty or funny! No distractions from the task the Lord has called us to.

**[b] Pastoral**

Have we taught the principles here clearly? Do believers under our care know that if they will not work, then they should not eat! **2 Thessalonians 3:8-10**. Let us be focused on being the best servants we can be, like our master, who gave His all for us.

**Notes****CHAPTER 7**

**7:1** Now the sons of Issachar were, Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimrom, four. **2** And the sons of Tola; Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their father's house, to wit, of Tola: they were valiant men of might in their generations; whose number was in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six hundred. **3** And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men. **4** And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers, were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand men: for they had many wives and sons. **5** And their brethren among all the families of Issachar were valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies fourscore and seven thousand.

**REFLECTION**

The promise and patriarchal blessing over Issachar by Jacob is recorded in **Genesis 49:14-15**. Refer back to that Commentary for a discussion of this. This tribe was to be always ready to serve, to put their shoulder to the wheel and push hard. They had grown in their prosperous land of the Vale of Jezreel to a mighty army, but they would be subject to “tribute”, and would be under the heel of the Philistines, facing multiple invasions of that group of robust pagans, and eventually they would go into captivity under the Assyrians, although Ezra’s mention of them here, few in numbers though they be now, means some had returned.

Their land stretched from the slopes of Mt Tabor to Mt Gilboa, and included the towns of En-Dor, Jezreel and Shunem. Sadly, the witch at En-Dor was a reflection of the compromise of this tribe and they fell into idolatry and were judged with the rest of the Northern Tribes. **1 Samuel 28**. Abishag, the last “wife/care-giver” of David will be described as coming from Shunem. In the dark days of the Northern Kingdom, Elisha ministered through this area, preaching the gospel message of his day. It was in Shunem that Elisha had the “prophet’s chamber built for him. **2 Kings 4**.

This was a tribe that faced much divine discipline for their compromises with paganism, with multiple armies criss crossing their land and yet they received the grace of God also, with the ministries of Elisha centred in

Shunem. God's grace offer of salvation was offered to these people right to the end. They had many great warriors, but they were all swept away, because the majority finally rejected the Lord, and so they lost their place in history.

With God we have a future, but in opposition to Him we have no lasting or significant place in time and space, nor any blessing in eternity. Amos, one of the last prophets to speak to them noted that there was no escape from the Lord's judgment if they persisted in rebellion. **Amos 5:18-27**. They were very religious, but not spiritually related to God, for they worshipped at the shrines of the pagan gods.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

It doesn't matter how many men we muster to fight, they cannot fight if their morale is low, and their faith weak. It is only if we trust the Lord and walk with Jesus in spirit and truth that we have the strength to face the foe of our soul. **Isaiah 30:15-18**.

### [b] Pastoral

Do we warn our people that it is not the numbers of people in the pews, but the commitment of those people to the Lord that makes a church great? Have we as pastors fallen into the trap of thinking that numbers matter? Do we preach the importance of serving the Lord in spirit and in truth? **John 4:23-24**.

**7:6 The sons of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three. 7 And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour; and were reckoned by their genealogies twenty and two thousand and thirty and four. 8 And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elioenai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and Alameth. All these are the sons of Becher. 9 And the number of them, after their genealogy by their generations, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, was twenty thousand and two hundred. 10 The sons also of Jediael; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahishahar. 11 All these the sons of Jediael, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, were seventeen thousand and two hundred soldiers, fit to go out for war and battle. 12 Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, and Hushim, the sons of Aher. 13 The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah. 14 The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare: (but his concubine the Aramitess bare Machir the father of Gilead: 15 And Machir took to wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name was Maachah;) and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16 And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh; and the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam and Rakem. 17 And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. 18 And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and Mahalah. 19 And the sons of Shemidah were, Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi, and Aniam. 20 And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, 21 And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. 22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23 And when he went in to his wife, she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24 (And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzzen-sherah.) 25 And Rephah was his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son. 26 Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son. 27 Non his son, Jehoshuah his son. 28 And their possessions and habitations were, Beth-el and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof: 29 And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel.**

## REFLECTION

Note the significant numbers of the Benjamites who have returned. The contrast to the Northern Tribes is marked. Few of the northern group returned from Assyrian and Babylonian Exile, although a remnant did. Of Judah (Simeon absorbed into them years before the Exile), Levi and Benjamin many returned. The dominant numbers will be of Judah, and soon the Israelites will be known as "Jews" (of Judah).

Ezra tells stories here of a number of the tribes to the north of Judah. Not much is told of Naphtali, and that may mean that none had returned to tell their stories and for Ezra to provide a foundation for their genealogy here. Nothing is added to the Genesis account for Naphtali, whereas for Manasseh and Ephraim, the largest of the Northern Tribes, there is significant commentary and addition to the Genesis account, with little details about some town founded that could only have been passed down from members of these tribes. Some must have returned, and enough to tell their stories.

Six families of Manasseh received their inheritance on the West Bank of Jordan, **Numbers 26:30-34, Joshua 17:2**, but only two are noted by Ezra here, indicating only two branches of the family have survived and returned, and need their stories recorded. Remember, the Lord doesn't "lose" his people, and the genetic inheritance of all twelve tribes will be recovered. We have God's Word on that – we will likely see it!

The battles against the Philistines of Gath are noted in Ephraim's account and the fact that they later had spread as far as Gaza indicates their numbers, and by the fall of Samaria they were like Judah to the south, the main tribe of their grouping. They were mighty but flawed in their arrogance and separation from God's will.

Isaiah records their national weakness as alcoholism, and their failure to deal with this and other sins and pagan evils leads to their Fall. The hope in the midst of all this is that such an extensive addition occurs here to the Genesis and Numbers accounts, indicating that many from Ephraim returned and told their stories to Ezra, and formed part of the new rebuilding projects, and resettlement of the land.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

No matter the size of original populations, if people do not serve the Lord in spirit and in truth, they will decline and be swept away over time. The ruins in the land of Israel testify to the judgments of God. So many people died in rebellion and rejection of God's simple and straight forward demands. Jesus' words over Jerusalem sum up his sadness and frustration with the people of Israel through the centuries. **Matthew 23:37**. Will we hear his words today?

### [b] Pastoral

History teaches us that people seldom learn from history! When we fail to teach the lessons of history, we make sure that our people will repeat all the errors of their ancestors! As Pastors of God's people, let us be sure to teach biblical history and strengthen God's people in all ways in the knowledge of the truth, and the reality of the consequences that flow from failure to obey!

**7:30 The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Isuah, and Ishuai, and Beriah, and Serah their sister. 31 And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who is the father of Birzavith. 32 And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister. 33 And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ashvath. These are the children of Japhlet. 34 And the sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35 And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imna, and Shelesh, and Amal. 36 The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah, 37 Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilshah, and Ithran, and Beera. 38 And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara. 39 And the sons of Ulla; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia. 40 All these were the children of Asher, heads of their father's house, choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the number throughout the genealogy of them that were apt to the war and to battle was twenty and six thousand men.**

## REFLECTION

The most handsome men and the choicest of princes are yet nothing unless they serve God whole heartedly and obey his commands. They had a great army, and their prosperity was great on their plot of earth, but they were all buried there or in far off Assyria. They failed, with the others to follow through and do what God asked, but some did return and rebuild anew.

## APPLICATION

**[a] Personal** - We must all be born again! We must all face our failings and return to the Lord. **Isaiah 1:10-20.** Let us heed Isaiah's call and be lifted up by the Holy Spirit, not ankle tapped by our own false self-confidence in any natural strengths we may have.

**[b] Pastoral** - It's not our kingly looks, attractive clothing, good manners, educational qualifications and glowing CV with all the jobs we have done, it is our close and loving obedient walk with Jesus that will make us great upon this earth. Let the Lord's people hear this always from your lips pastor.

## Notes

## CHAPTER 8

8:1 Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, 2 Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3 And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud, 4 And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5 And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram. 6 And these are the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7 And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahihud. 8 And Shaharaim begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. 9 And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Mesha, and Malcham, 10 And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These were his sons, heads of the fathers. 11 And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal. 12 The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built Ono, and Lod, with the towns thereof: 13 Beriah also, and Shema, who were heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14 And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth, 15 And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader, 16 And Michael, and Ispah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17 And Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18 Ishmerai also, and Jezliah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19 And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20 And Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel, 21 And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the sons of Shimhi; 22 And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23 And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24 And Hananiah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25 And Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak; 26 And Shamsheai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27 And Jaresiah, and Eliah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. 28 These were heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief men. These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29 And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon; whose wife's name was Maachah: 30 And his firstborn son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, 31 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32 And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem, over against them. 33 And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 34 And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35 And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36 And Ahaz begat Jehoadah; and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza, 37 And Moza begat Binea: Rapha was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son: 38 And Azel had six sons, whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. 39 And the sons of Eshek his brother were, Ulam his firstborn, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40 And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, an hundred and fifty. All these are of the sons of Benjamin.

## REFLECTION

This is the tribe that nearly was exterminated due to their defence of a paganism that was so disgraceful that the other tribes rose up to wipe them from the earth. **Judges 19-21.** This section of Judges makes harrowing reading, and yet the tribe will come back from the brink of extinction and rebuild over the next hundred plus years to produce Saul, the first king to unite all the tribes against the Philistines. This tribe pictures resurrection, and they will prosper after the return from Exile, and their greatest member is likely Saul of Tarsus, who we know as the great Apostle Paul.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

There is hope for any group if there is repentance. Immorality and paganism will destroy any group, no matter how numerous, but when they return to the Lord, He is merciful and will lift them up again. God's merciful nature is Ezra and Nehemiah's theme song. **2 Chronicles 30:9, Nehemiah 9:17, 31.**

**[b] Pastoral**

The Apostle Paul's life is a great example to us all. Pastors, do we preach about these biblical mentors to our youth and our older people? We have the stories of Scripture recorded for our strengthening, not our entertainment. Both Benjamites, King Saul and the Apostle Paul, are our examples, of what to do and what not to do!

They encourage us still, but to be encouraged we need to know their stories, and pastors, how will God's people know unless the preacher preaches? **Romans 10:14.**

**Notes.**

**CHAPTER 9**

9:1 So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression. 2 Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims. 3 And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh; 4 Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah. 5 And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons. 6 And of the sons of Zerah; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7 And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hasenuah, 8 And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephathiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah; 9 And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men were chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers. 10 And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin, 11 And Azariah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God; 12 And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer; 13 And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God. 14 And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari; 15 And Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph; 16 And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites. 17 And the porters were, Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum was the chief; 18 Who hitherto waited in the king's gate eastward: they were porters in the companies of the children of Levi. 19 And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, being over the host of the LORD, were keepers of the entry. 20 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him. 21 And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

**REFLECTION**

These are the people groups who were in Jerusalem before the captivity. The first three verses are important because they end forever the debate about the "lost ten tribes", for Ezra notes that after the fall of Samaria in 720 and the captivity of the North, many from these northern tribes had previously fled south and were living in Jerusalem with their southern brethren until all were taken away to Babylon. It explains why so many of these tribes are mentioned in the chapters above, as many were in Jerusalem when the city fell in 605, 597 and finally in 586. Many of these tribes do return in 535, and the 440s.

Nehemiah had difficulty getting people to live in Jerusalem when he returned to rebuild the walls. He had to get each tribal group to draw lots to send some of their people to Jerusalem.

I cannot help reflecting that Ezra may spend this time recording the inhabitant families of Jerusalem before the final Fall in 586 BC, because he wanted all the people who returned to feel some kinship to the families who were there before the Exile and feel a sense of kinship to the city through their own ancestors. This is very poignant, for as they rebuilt houses in the city they would have come across the bones of those killed in the last siege 586BC. **Nehemiah Chapter 7.**

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

**Nehemiah 8:10.** "The joy of the Lord is your strength". Worship will restore you, even if you are reinhabiting a ruin where your ancestors were slaughtered. **Isaiah 61:3.** "Put on the garments of praise, and so put off the spirit of heaviness". Remember the people who returned were often digging rubble from ruined houses to rebuild them, and would discover the dry bones of ancestors who had died in the great siege.



Are we ready to rebuild the ruins of places where God's Word was preached but where disobedience stopped the blessing? Let us be guided to serve wherever the Lord calls and move past the bodies of those who through disobedience failed to enter God's place for them.

### [b] Pastoral

**Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12** is a powerful challenge to us to enter into God's place of "Faith-Rest". Let's hear God's Word and proclaim it strongly. There is no place of blessing without faith!

**Luke 1:37** tells us that, "with God nothing is impossible". Note however the promise is stated clearly – "with God" alone. Place beside Luke's words, those of Hebrews 11:6. "Without faith it is impossible to please God".

**9:22 All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. 23 So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, namely, the house of the tabernacle, by wards. 24 In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. 25 And their brethren, which were in their villages, were to come after seven days from time to time with them. 26 For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. 27 And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them. 28 And certain of them had the charge of the ministering vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale. 29 Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices. 30 And some of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices. 31 And Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the set office over the things that were made in the pans. 32 And other of their brethren, of the sons of the Kohathites, were over the shewbread, to prepare it every Sabbath.**

### REFLECTION

The detail here is important, and Ezra wants us to see this. The people working in the city had their families join them at times so that family unity wasn't broken, but the wives and children had to understand that their father's work would take him away. God cares for families and marriages, and so there was provision to keep them strong by regular visits, but the work had to be done. Commuting to work is not new, and working in other cities is not a modern phenomenon!

Each group of workers had different functions, each to be specialists in their fields, with the spices, ointments, and anointing oils, as well as serving as priests. Others were in charge of the offerings of the meal that had to be prepared in the pans and pots. All the details of these things were to be done right, for the meal offerings spoke of the perfect humanity of Christ, and the precious and pure oil of the Holy Spirit. Details taught truths and were paid attention to, for all the people needed to see the importance of each detail.

### APPLICATION

#### [a] Personal

Let's get the details of our lives right before the Lord. God is the God of details; and each aspect of our life is to be right. How careful are we of the details? How determined are we to know the full counsel of God?

#### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, all of God's Word is for us to know and proclaim. **2 Timothy 3:16-17.**

The details are to be got right – all things are to proclaim the perfection and precision of the eternal plan of God.

Some ministers avoid prophetic truth, as they fear division in their churches. The Holy Spirit will never produce division; only sloppy or careless exegesis and hesitant preaching will create confusion and debate!

To turn away from prophecy is to avoid 27% of the Scriptures, and as the New Testament is only 24% of the Scriptures, it is to throw away more than the New Testament!!

Pastors, divisions are signs of the enemy's work, unity is the sign of the Holy Spirit's work. If you are producing division you have strayed away from the truth of God and the Spirit of God is not working within you – sort yourself out. **Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 3:3, 11:18, Ephesians 4:3-13.**

**9:33 And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night. 34 These chief fathers of the Levites were chief throughout their generations; these dwelt at Jerusalem. 35 And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife's name was Maachah: 36 And his firstborn son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab. 37 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38 And Mikloth begat Shimeam. And they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren. 39 And Ner begat Kish; and Kish begat Saul; and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 40 And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah. 41 And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, and Ahaz. 42 And Ahaz begat Jarah; and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza; 43 And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 44 And Azel had six sons, whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan: these were the sons of Azel.**

## REFLECTION

We move from the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the singers and then the family of Saul, the first king. Begin by noting that the singers were employed “day and night”. Whenever there was a service to be sung, they sang, and that is the biblical standard for pastor-teachers even to today. If there is work to do, we do it. Let us “pour” ourselves out to the Lord and for His people. **2 Timothy 4:1-8.**

Paul laboured through the working day working as a tent maker, and then through the heat of the day when others rested, he taught at the school of Tyrannus! The pagan philosopher's premises were empty through the heat of the day, but Paul hired his hall, and taught there to all believers who were keen enough on God's Word to miss their siesta and do a bible study in the heat of the day. **Acts 19:1-9.**

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he spent all night riding and walking around the walls, so no-one could see him, and no report would get out to the enemy. **Nehemiah 2:12-18.** Paul was ready to preach all night, if the people desired it. **Acts 20:6-12.** No laziness in ministry!

The next thing to meditate upon is the family of Saul, who begins so well, and ends so badly. There are probably descendants carrying King Saul's DNA still living amongst us today, but like the family descending later from David, they are now insignificant members of the tribe of Benjamin or Judah scattered around the world.

Saul had such promise, great natural abilities, impressive physique and handsome good looks, but his failure to walk close to God, and his love of the power he wielded led to paranoia and murderous actions. He was lifted up, and he was cast down because he forgot who lifted him up!

The Lord is the “glory and the lifter of our head”. **Psalms 3:3.** When we forget that the Lord has given us everything we are in danger of losing everything. **Psalms 18:48, 30:1, 102:10.**

We are instructed again and again to “lift up our eyes to the Lord”, and to cast ourselves before his throne and He will “lift us up” to where we can serve and win glory for Jesus. **1 Peter 5:5-10.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Let us not be proud or arrogant regarding any role the Lord has given us. Let us be focused upon His service alone, and let us devote ourselves to the glory of God, not the praise of men. Remember from how high Saul fell, and the carnage he caused, not only to others in the process, but also to his own family.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, let us remind people of the rising and falling of great women and men, and the reasons for their greatness and their failures. We walk through space-time in a fragile frame that needs the Lord's grace, mercy and love to walk safely. Let us walk as we are called to walk. **Romans 8:1, 4, 13:13, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 5:14, 25, Ephesians 5:2, 15-18.**

**Notes.****CHAPTER 10**

**10:1** Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. **2** And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. **3** And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. **4** Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. **5** And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died. **6** So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together. **7** And when all the men of Israel that were in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. **8** And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa. **9** And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people. **10** And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. **11** And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, **12** They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days. **13** So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; **14** And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

**REFLECTION**

Ezra starts his story where **1 Samuel 31** begins. Refer to that Commentary and read through the study on that chapter and then read the chapter here. Samuel is likely written in the days of David or Solomon, and so Ezra is writing 500+ years later, and is reflecting on the lessons of these years in light of the Exile. As mentioned above, Chronicles is like John's Gospel, written last, well after the events, as a reflective history that is designed to make you think about the events in a new way, and be challenged in a powerful way, not to repeat the errors of the past.

The writer of Samuel was not to know how things would end, but Ezra does, for he lives 100 years after the catastrophe, and so he reflects with a power and passion that we would expect as he faces the carnage unleashed by the people's sins through the centuries. The work he writes here, with the book that carries his name, are passionate appeals to the restored nation, not to repeat the paganism of their ancestors.

From Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks, **Daniel 9:24-27**, Ezra and Nehemiah both knew that they were overseeing the start of the prophetic clock ticking towards Messiah. They were both desperate for the people to use the time they had to prepare the way for Messiah, and to welcome Him when He came.

They could read in Daniel's words the truth to come, that the second temple and the walls that Nehemiah rebuilt would be trashed and the people sent into a wider dispersion than they had been in 586 BC, but like all lovers of their own people, they hoped to save some!

Look up in a concordance how many times the word “remnant” is used by the earlier prophets, and see that Ezra understood, that unless the people seriously repented, they would be reduced to a small remnant again. Sadly they were, in 70 AD and then again in 138 AD. They were in dispersal until our own day, being restored as a nation in 1948, and celebrating their Jubilee Year by having Jerusalem as their capital again.

Note that Saul’s life story is severely restricted – to his death alone – and there is a spiritual reason for Ezra’s emphasis here. Saul’s triumphs were all wiped away by his evil actions, and his sins ruined his life, his legacy and his descendants’ lives. All his house perished with him. Now at this point we say, “Oh Ezra some survived”, and they were part of the uprising of Absalom and later had to be killed by David. 2 Samuel 21. Ezra’s point still stands, for Saul’s sins meant his entire house was judged, and while daughters may have passed his DNA on, all the great men of his house were wiped out.

Saul’s persistent sinful actions destroyed all he touched. He wept and wailed for his sins often, but he never changed his behaviours, and he never passed the kingdom to David as the prophet indicated he ought to have done. I hear some saying, “No-one did this at this time”, but that is now rebuked, for we, like Saul, are to be ready to be the first to do something; to follow God where others don’t even think... All of us who follow the Lord, “FOLLOW the Lord”, and that means doing what isn’t done at our time by others. David will fail, but he will repent and he will show mercy where others did not. David will show what Saul could have been.

Ezra is quite specific in identifying the consultation with the witch at En-Dor as the reason for his death, and as an author of Scripture we must pay attention to this. Saul had confessed his sins many times, and from this observation of Ezra we must conclude that his previous sins were forgiven. The principle of **Psalm 103:8-18** applies to him, as to all. When sin is forgiven God speaks of it no more, and we will see this again and again in Chronicles, where a great sin of a king, mentioned in the Kings account is not mentioned in Chronicles, because the king is forgiven and so his sin is wiped away, and is not spoken of again!

The sin that was the “sin unto death” for Saul, was consulting the demon possessed woman at En-Dor, and he knew it himself, and likely shared it with his sons before they went into battle. They went into the last battle knowing they were doomed, but they went bravely to their deaths, and as Saul had many hours after being told by Samuel of the death sentence over him, we must conclude he dealt with his last sin also, and accepted the Lord’s verdict as did his sons who chose to die with him. **1 Samuel 28:18ff.**

His suicide was unnecessary as he was dying and the Philistines were being recalled and would only return in the morning. He and his armour bearer felt the shame and condemn themselves to death for the defeat here, for they know it will lead to many more deaths amongst the Israelites of the north. Ezra is clear, verse 13, “he died for his transgression...” The “Sin Unto Death” does not mean loss of salvation, and Moses is placed under it, as is Aaron, but are certainly in heaven today. **1 John 5:14-16.** Once the sentence is given however it is final, and Saul and his house are gone from the land.

Ezra wants the returned exiles to remember this battle on Gilboa, for they may also lose their hold on the land and on their lives if they consult mediums and follow after paganism. Spiritual compromise is no light thing, but a fatal thing before God! Moses made it clear, and Saul illustrates the cost. **Deuteronomy 11:16-22, 12:20-32, 13:1-5, 18:15-22, 27:15ff, 28:15ff.**

The men of Jabesh-Gilead are honoured over 600 years later by Ezra’s words, for they were tough, and risked their lives and fought their way to the walls of the enemy’s strongholds to regain the bodies of the fallen and give them decent burial. Saul and his sons deserved that, for they fought for the nation, but they failed to do what was required, and Ezra’s point is crucial. Honour those who die bravely fighting for you, but ensure that they die with spiritual purpose, and that you live in godliness thereafter, for otherwise all they fought for will be lost.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal and [b] Pastoral

Saul lost all he had, and his family went from palace to farmlet, and it was all due to spiritual compromise and playing with paganism. No compromise with evil religion! Warn one another and keep each other safe by good counsel. Power lust and false religion kills!

Do we warn God’s people strongly enough against paganism? Some sins are fatal!

**CHAPTER 11**

**11:1** Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. **2** And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. **3** Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel. **4** And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. **5** And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. **6** And David said, "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain". So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. **7** And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David. **8** And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. **9** So David waxed greater and greater: for the LORD of hosts was with him.

**REFLECTION**

The entire period of battles between Saul and David is left out, as is the Civil War between the puppet survivors of the house of Saul and David, the legitimate king. The reason for these omissions is that those fighting against David were fighting God, for to stand against God's anointed is to fight God's Plan, and you have no place in history! People who fight against God's clearly revealed will are just not interesting to Ezra, for they have no eternal destiny, except with Satan, for he does that and follows pride.....

This is a history of believers, who may fail, but who pick themselves up through confession and spiritual growth. The unbeliever kings of the Northern Kingdom will not be spoken of, except in passing, for they are "passing away", like all the temporary details of this brief life in space-time. **1 Corinthians 7:31**.

In God's story, which is the one that matters eternally, the key event was the acceptance of David as king by all, for God had declared him king over all, and those who fought against this were evil, for the definition of evil is, "they fought against God's will"! **2 Samuel, Chapters 1-5**.

All who delayed their acceptance of God's clearly revealed will are people of no consequence for eternity. God's story moves on and we are either on board, or under the wheels! Ezra wants to remind the people of his day that the people blessed forever were "on board" with God's plan, and those judged forever are seen by history as the "losers" and "fools". What arrogant people think is often turned upside down in time!

Joab is a tough character, and he will go very bad later (Absalom's Rebellion and thereafter), but he is very brave, and early on he secures David's throne by his actions. Do not mistake bravery for character and moral goodness – for many evil men and women have been brave in evil causes! Joab climbs up the toilet chute and captures the city of Jerusalem, and the arrogant inhabitants are killed or incorporated into the now Israelite city. **2 Samuel 5:6-10**.

This city is God's choice, not just for David, but for the entire world, and it has been the spiritual centre of the world ever since, and it will always be, until this world implodes and the entire present universe is replaced by the new one. **2 Peter 3:9-18, Revelation 20-22**.

Joab is remembered as a stronghold builder, as well as a general, and the remains of the Millo has been recently identified by the archaeologists working outside the present walls. No matter how well walls are built however they only stand if God allows them to stand. The slightest earthquake, or flood, can bring down walls and end an empire, and the Assyrian Empire fell on a day because of the washing away of a section of their great city walls in 612 BC. On the very last day of the siege they were swept away and all was lost!

David was secure because he walked with God, and heeded the correction of the Lord's prophets and priests. **2 Samuel 8:11-14**. The greatness of any ruler or king is seen by their readiness to receive rebuke, and to open their heart to new information and reassess earlier decisions in light of the truth, rather than their idea of their own majesty.

Saul failed as king in his paranoia, as did Charles the First of England, and as did Adolf Hitler. Each man was quite different morally, but each shared the character trait of arrogant stupidity; and so they lost wars they should have won, because they would not be corrected.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Are we like David, or like those who stood against him? David was wrong at times, and he dealt with his sins, but many were self-righteously arrogant towards David, thinking that he was such a terrible person that they couldn't stand him! They rejected David and in doing so they rejected their own place in history, for David was God's leader, and all opposing him or ignoring him were outside God's will! It doesn't matter whether we like or dislike a leader, it only matters whether he or she is God's leader; if they are, get aboard the bus believer, or be left behind, or run over by the bus!

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, are you acting like David, or like Saul? Are you open to correction and change of direction when convicted of being wrong? Moses and David were weak and error ridden men, but they were humble servants of the Lord and they are mentors still for us. Let us be like them; ready to be convicted and change.

**Haggai 2:4.** "Take courage and work, for I am with you says the LORD".

**11:10** These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel. **11** And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain by him at one time. **12** And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties. **13** He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. **14** And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance. **15** Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. **16** And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Beth-lehem. **17** And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate!

**18** And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD. **19** And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.

**REFLECTION**

This passage is parallel to that in **2 Samuel 23**, but there are some additional stories of greatness here, and they are to be noted as Ezra is emphasizing principles of leadership here. Just a note also on any discrepancies of numbers between the earlier accounts of Samuel and Kings, and here. Ezra may have extra information, and so be specifically adding in some additional "casualty figures". Don't buy into the arguments about discrepancies – there are differences, and having personally seen military and naval records be changed over a century or more as additional information comes in, I am relaxed about the numbers, I am focused upon the principles behind the actions described.

Jashobeam is a great man with a mighty spear, and as the "chief of captains" it may have been a standard as such also. He was able to kill 300 men with his weapon on one day, by focused hand to hand combat through a day of fighting. This is focus, for to lose your concentration at any point in such fighting was to die, but this man just kept moving forward. That is Ezra's point about him; he stood, he moved forward not backwards, and he focused on the enemy and slew them, he didn't allow any physical, spiritual, or mental distractions. This is a leadership mentor!

The next hero, Eleazer, is one of the three great heroes, who stood against overwhelming odds, and faced their enemy and just focused their blows, and in the midst of a barley field slew the enemy, but did not give up their field of battle. They just kept fighting until the Philistines fled, and the result was their people were delivered from certain death.

It was clear to all who saw this that God was with these three men and they were delivered in such a way that God got the glory. Ezra's point is always to be seen, and that is his point – when God's people take their stand on God's ground, they bring glory to God. We may get glory and praise, but God is the one to whom glory goes in the end.

The last story is one told in **2 Samuel 23:13-17**, and its repetition here is important. David doesn't want his men to risk their lives for him, but they do, and do so readily. David however shows his dignity and character, and he pours the water obtained out as a thanks offering to the Lord. Alexander the Great will do a similar thing on the march back from India, but don't confuse the stories, for Alexander it was his greatness as a commander that he preferred to die of thirst with his men than drink and have them die. David's greatness is that he admitted his error in expressing aloud his desire, and he gave thanks to the Lord for the deliverance of his men, and then placed himself in the Lord's hands for deliverance.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Whose strength do we trust in to save us? **Isaiah 40:31, 1 Peter 5:10-11**. God wants us to be heroes of faith like these men, and like those of Hebrews 11. We will be heroes as we rest in his truth and apply it into our lives and serve with focused attention on obedience, just as these men did.

### [b] Pastoral

Do we teach the military virtues of the Christian Soldier? Ephesians 6 makes it clear we are called to "active service", and so let's be armed and ready, and let us advance into the tasks the Lord has given us.

**11:20 And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had a name among the three. 21 Of the three, he was more honourable than the two; for he was their captain: howbeit he attained not to the first three. 22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lionlike men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. 23 And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.**

## REFLECTION

Abishai was one of the "famous three", and he too had the ability to kill large numbers with his spear, and he was loyal to David to the end. David doubted Joab, quite rightly in the rebellion of Absalom, but Joab's brother Abishai was beyond doubt, and yet David was angry at him also after the death of Absalom. **2 Samuel 19:19-23**.

David has realised something about the brothers that made him doubt Abishai as well, but as an old man Abishai still leaps in to protect David in the last battle David fights. **2 Samuel 21:15-17**. Heart disease is starting to take its toll on David, and he will soon suffer generalized circulation problems. **1 Kings 1:1-4**.

Benaiah will become the general after Joab's death, and will assist Solomon establish the kingdom in security. He is noted as one of the "young guns" of the heroes, and he certainly was setting an example in "mixed martial arts", for he can handle a sword, a spear, and a staff, but also he is not afraid to take on an Asiatic Lion in a confined space when it is hungry in the winter. These men sought out actions that set them apart, not for sheer pride based bravado (like the Greek heroes), but to test themselves and so win renown, in order to serve their lord more powerfully and bring more glory to him.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Do we seek to "win renown"? Not for self-publicity, but for the glory of the Lord. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit and only do what we are told to do, but do we "put ourselves out there for the Lord"? Are we ready to hazard our lives when directed to do so, or do we pull back to comfortable tasks and places?

Abishai is well into his 60s when he leaps into the thick of the battle, and yet most today in their 60s are speaking of retirement. There is no retirement to these men, and we need to challenge ourselves on this matter and ensure our mental attitude is biblical, not from the "Commissioner for Retirement".

If the Lord has left us here, we are here for a reason; let us find that reason and live to the full until we die. We are not here to sit in a deck chair and relax, we are here to serve the King, and so let's be like these men.

#### **[b] Pastoral**

Pastors are often the first to pull back from hard work as they age, often because they have become unfit. Pastors, are we setting a good example of healthy living, fitness and toughness for the flock to follow. An unfit and sluggish pastor is a contradiction in terms. Let's be fit and focused like these three men. David only slows down when heart disease fells him, but he keep thinking and working until his eyes close.

In pastoral training are we teaching physical fitness and health? Should we be? These men were 100% fit and ready to do whatever the Lord demanded of them, and that would appear to be the standard. For Paul it certainly was, and he was fit for purpose till the end.

**11:24 These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among the three mighties. 25 Behold, he was honourable among the thirty, but attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 26 Also the valiant men of the armies were, Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem, 27 Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite, 28 Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abi-ezer the Antothite, 29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, 30 Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, 31 Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, 32 Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33 Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, 34 The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite, 35 Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, 36 Hopher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37 Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, 38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri, 39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armourbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 42 Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, 43 Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite, 45 Jedial the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, 46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.**

#### **REFLECTION**

To us, these are just names that might pop up in Tolkien or CS Lewis' books, and our eyes glaze over, but each was a hero, and I suspect each had living relatives who were part of the returned Exiles, and so each was a "living example" for their relatives in Ezra's day. We do not know their deeds but tales of their deeds were likely told by their families at gatherings every year to keep their history/legend alive.

#### **APPLICATION**

##### **[a] Personal**

Do we know the stories of the great heroes of faith? Are Amy Carmichael, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, George Whitfield, John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, ... are they known and do we tell their stories to others? What illustrations do we use in messages? Do we educate believers in heroes?

##### **[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, do the Lord's people under your care know the great heroes of their faith? Have you given them mentors of faith or left the world to provide the fakes from reality television shows?

Let us tell of the people we will meet in heaven, as we will spend eternity with them, and yet we speak of the world's heroes rather than the eternal ones. Let us be ashamed, as we ought to be, and lift up the real heroes of eternity.



**CHAPTER 12**

**1** Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. **2** They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. **3** The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite, **4** And Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite, **5** Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite, **6** Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites, **7** And Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

**REFLECTION**

Now we have a list of men not found in the existing text of Samuel or Kings, and it is an important addition, possibly kept by Benjamites and brought back from the Exile to encourage their brethren, to see that they too had heroes who stood with David. The Benjamites were the supporters of "their king" Saul, and were seen by the other tribes as being not 100% loyal to the house of David at times, but this was far from the truth and Ezra documents this fact.

These men were ambidextrous with their weapons and in a close hand to hand combat battle this was a considerable advantage; as they could change the direction of their defence and attack instantly and get the better of any foe. To have archers/slingers that could fire from either side was crucial in ambushes, as they provided tactical surprise and lethality from any direction in a battle.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

How flexible are our skills in the Lord's service? The men of Benjamin were a real asset to David, and we need to pause and reflect, as to whether we are a real asset to the church we are serving within. Have we gained all the skills we could have gained through the years? Can we use any skill we have for the Lord's glory? How hungry are we to utilize every skill we have for the Lord?

**[b] Pastoral**

Do we encourage the Lord's people to be the best prepared people for the Lord's call? Do we encourage all young believers to get every skill they can to serve the Lord? How hungry are we still to learn in pastoral work?

In my tent-making work of counselling I must do the equivalent of two full post-graduate papers of study each year to stay current. Some of my colleagues treat it as onerous, but I pick things I have always wanted to master and throw myself into learning new things.

Our professional development as pastors is critical for professional and committed service. A lazy minister is a contradiction – for we serve the King of kings and Lord of all lords!

**12:8** And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains; **9** Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, **10** Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, **11** Attai the sixth, Eiel the seventh, **12** Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, **13** Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. **14** These were of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. **15** These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west.

**REFLECTION**

This is another commando unit of David's army that we don't read of anywhere else. It is a hopeful section, for these men must have had descendants who also returned with Ezra or earlier under Zerubbabel, and their story is passed on here.

Ezra is determined that no story of heroes beyond the main surviving tribes of Judah and Benjamin is forgotten. Ezra wants all the tribes united in the Word of God, and he wants them to affirm the only time after Moses and Joshua when they were united as a people. They had unity under David, and God wants that unity kept, for it is eternal.

You may be surprised at my use of the term “eternal” to describe the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel (Joseph’s two tribes either counted as one with Levi, or as two without Levi), but it is a biblical statement. Ezekiel describes the Millennial Kingdom division of the land in Ezekiel 48 and they are all there for the 1000-year reign of the Lord as Messiah and King of kings. When John describes the eternal Jerusalem in **Revelation 21**, the gates of the city (space station) have the names of the twelve tribes upon them.

When modern Israel was re-established, even though the last kingdom to fall was Judah, and for the next 500 years the area was called Judea, the Jewish leaders decided that the name of the new nation was to be “Israel” – all the tribes were part of the new entity, without Judah being the controller. The return of the “lost” tribes from far and wide has gone on apace in recent years and DNA is starting to be used to identify the twelve or thirteen possible markers for the various tribes.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

All are involved, even the small tribes like Gad. All people groups are to find their home in the church, and all are to be welcomed as equals before the Lord, every language, culture and background accepted and embraced.

### [b] Pastoral

Are we inclusive in a biblical sense in our local churches? Do we look at the “packaging” of people or the hero of faith within?

There is the world’s “inclusiveness”, which means the moral acceptance of sexual things the Bible condemns, but we welcome all who honour the Lord Jesus and all who accept his lordship over them, and that means we accept all who obey His Holy Word.

**12:16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. 17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. 18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.**

## REFLECTION

Once again we have words here that do not tie to any previous record we have of David’s doings. The event described here is while David is down in the Judean desert area, and being hunted by Saul, and so he is cautious about quick acceptance and receiving spies into his midst.

Ezra’s interest in this story is that it records the very formal swearing process that bound one man to another in the ancient world and still today in Arab circles. There is the formal assertion that they come in peace, for David’s prosperity not his judgment. Remember that “Shalom” means all that tends to peace and prosperity.

He then promises to “knit his heart to theirs”. He commits to them before he asks them to commit to him. This is the pattern of the true leader; the genuine leader lays his heart and plan out before he asks any to commit to him/her. True leadership is transparent and open, never with hidden deals and dark arrangements. We are to leave that to the enemy!

David then is able to assert that he is standing for God, and because of a call from God, and there is no unrighteousness in his hands towards Saul and his house, nor any negativity towards any other tribe. It is this spirit of unity that we have commented on above, and it is the sign of the Holy Spirit, just as disunity and hatred between brethren is a sign of the enemy. He asks God to rebuke him and judge him if he is being deceptive in any way, and he means it.

As a man upon whom the Holy Spirit came, Amasa speaks up and praises God and affirms that David is indeed the one to bring peace to the nation. Check out Amasa's family connection, for he is David's mother's sister son! **1 Chronicles 2:15-17**. He is a cousin, but he will go on to support Absalom later, and then change sides when David wins, and David will appoint him to command his own army reserve for a call up of the Tribal levies, possibly as a political manoeuvre to show no malice to enemies. **2 Samuel 20:1-5**.

Amasa will be killed by his own cousin Joab! **2 Samuel 20:6-13**. He is a good man but easily fooled; first by Absalom then by Joab, to his death! Ezra gives him the honour however – for he was great, just not up to the ruthlessly efficient organization and generalship of Joab, nor alert to Joab's murderous ruthlessness.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Is our standard of behaviour towards others up to the Davidic standard?

David, for all his faults was very loyal to his men, and even Amasa is returned to favour after he has made his peace, following the rebellion of Absalom, but he is too slow raising the army and not prepared for Joab's evil mind.

How willing are we to forgive those who have betrayed us? How willing to forgive those who have embarrassed us? David was, but he rightly gets annoyed at Amasa moving too slowly, and that is a lesson also; when tasked with an urgent job – do it urgently!!!

### [b] Pastoral

As pastors we must stand before the Lord's people and be ready to say, "The Lord judge me if I am wrong in any way here...."

David sets the pace for real leadership. Let us look into the heart of this man and be moved and encouraged.

**12:19 And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle: but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads. 20 As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediahel, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. 21 And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host. 22 For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.**

## REFLECTION

Ezra is keen to record any from the ten northern tribes who came over to David before he was anointed king in Hebron, and he hears of the men of Manasseh who joined David and who marched with him to fight alongside the Philistines, and when they were all thankfully delivered by God from fighting their relatives. **1 Samuel 29-30**.

These men then were part of the attack on the southern Amalekites to recover the people after Ziklag was captured. Ezra wants to affirm that unity principle, and remind all the returnees from Babylonian or Assyrian exile that they belong under the flag of David, and that their ancestors all helped him be established as king. He is being a "spin doctor" here, for the majority didn't like him, and the majority sided with Absalom, but unity is the key, and Ezra wants all to affirm the loyalty they can. As Churchill said humourously, "If you want to lose faith in democracy, speak with the average voter...."

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

How many rebellions did Moses face believer? At least thirteen we find recorded in the record of their journey from Egypt to Jordan! How many rebellions and how many struggles did David face against his own people who doubted him and felt he was not good enough at some point? Answer – many! How faithful are we to God's chosen leadership?

**[b] Pastoral**

Just because you are God's anointed, do not think that you will be universally approved. God's best leaders have faced the worst struggles to get the job done. Tenacity is required in the Lord's work and loyalty is demanded by the Lord of us all towards his anointed leadership.

Remember how hard David had to work to exercise his God given authority and how tenacious he needed to be all through his life. Don't take rebellion and disloyalty personally; you are in great company .....

**12:23 And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24 The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. 25 Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. 26 Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred. 27 And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred; 28 And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. 29 And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. 30 And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. 31 And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. 32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment. 33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart. 34 And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. 35 And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. 36 And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. 37 And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand. 38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king. 39 And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40 Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.**

**REFLECTION**

In **2 Samuel 5:1-5** we have the basic details given, but once again Ezra has the facts and figures of who came, and what they said and stood for as units and tribes. He tries to have a different thing to say of each, to underline his message = we are all different but we are all together in the Plan of God, and David is at the centre of that plan.

The men of Judah are "ready armed for war". They know that the crowning of David as king will provoke the Philistines, as Israel is a vassal state of some sort under Saul, and the Philistines will attack at some point. These men are ready to applaud their "man" as king, but they are also ready to fight their enemies for him and with his leadership.

Simeon to the south of Judah has been hammered by the Amalekites and others, but their men are "valiant, men of valour" – they have sent their best. Zadok the priest has come with armed priests, ready to pray and also ready to fight. They are the chaplains of the army, but ready to do whatever is required.

The Benjamite contingent are the "Guards" of Saul, and so these are the best of their tribe, and they are ready to fight for David, and many of them will be known by name by David, for he led them and fought with them before his flight from Saul. 1 Samuel 18.

The Ephraimites are men who are "famous throughout the house of their fathers". These are the heroes of their tribe, and all have a point to prove that they are the best. Their cousins in the half tribe of Manasseh are also men who are known by name as fighters of renown.

I particularly like, as clearly Ezra did, the comment made about the men of Issachar. They were "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." Few in each generation actually "know the age they live in", and get what God wants done, and that is what Ezra wants for the people of his day.

All returned Israel needs to know what they are to do and, “just do it”. Mordecai’s words from the generation before Ezra come to mind. “Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14. Each and every person needs to be prayerful, careful and thoughtful about what the Lord wants them to do, and quietly, obediently do it.... Remember the Nike Sport advert! “Just Do it!”

Of Zebulon and of Manasseh the men were fully armed, with flexible arms, “all instruments of war”, also it is noted of Zebulon, “they could keep rank; they were not of double heart”. They were able to work together in a tight formation and be used for smashing through an enemy line and they would not double back – there was no turning with them.

Naphtali were hoplite armed, with shield and spear, like the proto-Greek forces of Mycenae and Troy, and these hoplite troops were the heavy infantry of their day. Asher were, “experts in war”, and could be trusted in difficult situations.

The great thing about each detachment, is that they brought their own supplies, so that the entire army was self-sustaining. No support army was required to keep them in the field. All the units brought food, but the closer tribes brought additional supplies for all to share, and so there was enough for the three days of feasting to unify the tribes and anoint David, but also enough if they had to march off and engage the enemy. The close by tribes did extra, and that meant their princes had thought through what would be best for the entire army and did what would work for them all. “Others” is our motto in the Lord.

## **APPLICATION**

### **[a] Personal**

The troops that came with their princes to Hebron came with a single focus, no double thinking. Their “mental skills” were fine-tuned and they were ready to be of “one heart” with David, and that meant his heart would lead them. To be of one heart, meant you were ready to be totally united with your commander, in his plans and in his spirit. This would make the army unbeatable and it was – the Philistines, who lived to fight, were defeated again and again. Today we call it “Mental Skills” in sport, but here it’s the “Faith-Rest Life”.

### **[b] Pastoral**

How well do we think through the logistics of events and missions? We are to be people of faith-rest, but that doesn’t mean we “rest on our deck chairs”; we prayerfully think through what is needed and we get everything ready for ourselves and for those who may be part of our team. God’s people are not stingy, but always have enough to share with others.

Each tribe sent its best, and as pastors that is always to be our challenge; let us have no “B” team, but all people feeling like and working like the “A” team, with 100%, no half-hearted efforts.

Each mission is an anointed work, and that means there is an anointed leader, and that is anointed by God, and the others need to recognize this and be led by them. Let us be sure that before we advance, that the leader is in charge and leading, and recognized by all.

## **Notes**

**CHAPTER 13**

**13:1** And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. **2** And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: **3** And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. **4** And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. **5** So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. **6** And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. **7** And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. **8** And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. **9** And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. **10** And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. **11** And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. **12** And David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me"? **13** So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. **14** And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

**REFLECTION**

Ezra will now tell of the bringing up of the ark, and he will slip in additional observations that we don't find in **2 Samuel 6**, and we note them, remembering Ezra's purpose. He is very clear in his godly purpose, and it is to remind the Israelites after their return from Babylon, that their ancestors went into captivity for not getting the things of God right! They often did the right thing, but in the wrong way, and God is a God of detail, and if a thing is to be done one way, that is the ONLY way it is to be done.

Ezra begins by noting David's extensive consultation process, "with every leader", and we must assume the priesthood, although, when specifically asked they will later discover or reveal the right details from the Torah record. There are two possibilities here; the first is that in the emotionalism of the coronation there was a feeling of blessing over the tribes, a feeling that David was king and all was changed. There was the feeling that God was smiling on them and that this state of affairs would continue. This was true, for finally David was king as God had directed, but that didn't mean they could ignore the other things that God had directed!

The second possible reason for this error in the moving of the ark is that it had last been moved on a new cart, made for the purpose, and that this may be the acceptable manner for its transport. Maybe the "new age" that had dawned meant God was allowing them to do things in a new way? It is a reminder that they were wrong on either count, and so are we if we use this natural, but false logic. "God is the same yesterday, today and forever". **Hebrews 13:8**. This means that the way things are done in the filling of the Holy Spirit will have a stable core to it through the centuries. God's standards do not shift to suit us, or our emotions at the time. The "Fruit of the Holy Spirit" will always be present when God works!

Consultation with men and women is no substitute for consultation with God. It is the Lord alone who directs and guides in spiritual matter; we are not to discuss and confer with people over spiritual direction, we are together or alone to pray and do appropriate Bible study, and seek the Lord's face. We are to remember always that consensus doesn't mean we are right, for God's specific voice alone can be depended upon. **Psalms 62:5, Isaiah 26:3-4, 49:23**.

David's polite invitation to all Israel is sent out, and once again we don't get this detail in Samuel, and it is important, for it shows the heart of David in this matter, and we know it reflects the truth, for David often enquired of the ark for direction. He was right in his motives and in his deepest heart's desire, but none challenged the new king.

I have reflected upon this, for from this point onwards, prophet, priest and general will challenge him at times, and I suspect it is because he gave them permission to do so, from this point onwards! They didn't get this

wrong, for David never again wanted to follow any path without gentle challenge if someone felt the Lord's path was elsewhere. The greatest leaders always hear challenge – satanic pride refuses to be challenged.

The phrase “all Israel”, means that representatives from every tribe were present at this event, and the failure here, and God's judgment, was very public. David put himself on the line here and it backfired on him, but to the benefit of his generation and Ezra's, for all would know, God is holy and they are to do things rightly, not incorrectly. “Near enough is good enough”, has never been a genuine believer's motto, and it must not be for ourselves. Prayerfulness and open ears, hearts, and minds for guidance; this is to be our focus.

In verse 6 Ezra reminds all who hear his words of the shape and nature of the ark, and its holy function, that it was the place where the blood of atonement was shed, under the two cherubim that had overshadowed the mercy seat. God's mercy and justice met there visibly, and His holy judgment was upon his people, and always is.

We must always be open to conviction, or we cannot be guided in correct paths. The subject of Confession of Sin is in view, and the need for the righteousness of God to cover us is daily, and moment by moment throughout each day, and this is the reality for the Spiritual Believer, walking in the Filling of the Holy Spirit. **Ephesians 5:1-21, 1 John 1:5-10.**

“David played with all his might”, and all who played and sang that day, none held back. Passionate and sincere worship flowed like an unpolluted stream from the rock! There was no error or personal sin that clouded their worship, except they were doing the wrong thing!!!

They were whole hearted in their worship, and they were sincere in their love for God and their real and powerful joy at the ark moving towards Jerusalem for the first time. They were sincere, but they were sincerely wrong! This challenges us today, and every day of history, for sincerity is not a virtue, truth is the virtue. Sincerity only gets its value when we are doing what God wanted, as God wanted it done.

God doesn't want animals or machines doing the spiritual work of men, where men need to do it in a Holy Spirit and careful-prayerful manner. Men were to carry the ark, and not any men, but Levites set aside and trained for the purpose. It was to be careful, prayerful, every step of the journey. The Oxen did what oxen do; they stumbled at a pot hole. The Men would have seen the problem and all the carrying men would have compensated and none stumbled fatally, but animals don't work that way. Don't blame the ox, blame the men for not reading Exodus and thinking it applied! The Bible still applies, it doesn't date; God doesn't change through time. It is us who are required to get our lives firmly into His Path for us.

Uzzah died “before the Lord”, trying to help God, but in a situation where God doesn't need help, and pause and reflect brothers and sisters; does God ever need help? If we are helping God, we are doing the wrong thing! Verse 11 tells us that even to Ezra's day the place where this occurred is still called by this now 600 year old name to remind the people; do not think God doesn't care about details! Ezra is calling his people to holiness before the Lord, to full and complete separation from the gods and goddesses (demonic inspired and empowered worship) that surrounded them.

God's message was clear by blessing the home of Obed-Edom; He will bless those who care for holy things, and do things in a holy way. God cares about the details. David is rightly fearful and afraid, for holy fear purges out evil and stupidity over time, and David needed to “sit with” the events of this day and hear and obey the correct instructions.

I suspect also that the priests and king all apologized to each other over this, for all had been in error in their logic. They take the time to plan this so that trained Levites are ready for the real move to the tent that has been readied to receive the ark in Jerusalem. David was fearful also that the Philistines may attack in this delay time, but he knows he is in God's hands, and that he is now seeking the Lord and so no evil will befall them if they prayerfully get this right.

There is no haste in the Lord's work; He has a Plan and we are to promptly and obediently get our part in the plan right 100%. God doesn't panic or worry, and neither are we to worry or panic. **1 Peter 5:5-10.** We are to rest in the Word, be very clear about instructions and direction, and then by faith rise and obey. **Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12.** For the returned Exiles this is the lesson they need to take onboard 100%. So do we all every day.

#### APPLICATION

**[a] Personal**

Let us not fall into the error of thinking we can do things new ways, when the Lord has clear direction another way. In some matters we are free to select a path and see it blessed, but there are things that do not change, and we are simply to be obedient and move forward in prayerful humility.

When we get things wrong, let us quickly get on our knees and reflect fully. Let us not cover up error but expose it to the light of God's Word and be corrected and grow thereby. As we say, "Be very scared believer" – get God's path right, for a minor error in direction now will have you shipwrecked later.

**[b] Pastoral**

What a mentor of leadership David is! Many leaders having publicly failed so badly will not even attempt to set a thing right, they will quietly shelve their plans and move away from the very thought of repetition. David "sits with his great error" and so learns, and not only his generation is blessed, but Ezra and our own also.

**Notes****CHAPTER 14**

**14:1** Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house. **2** And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel. **3** And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters. **4** Now these are the names of his children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, **5** And Ibhar, and Elishua, and Elpalet, **6** And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, **7** And Elishama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

**REFLECTION**

Two matters of production are addressed here. The preparation for the building of the Temple and Palaces, and the building of his genetic house; his sons born in Jerusalem. Ezra in this place ignores the sons born in Hebron or earlier, for they are all non-entities or evil men, but he notes here the group born in the City of David, and two are crucial for the rest of human history, and for the eternal destiny of us all. They are Solomon and Nathan, both sons of David and Bathsheba. **2 Samuel 3:1-5, 5:13-16, 1 Chronicles 3:1-9.**

David has a reputation, not unlike the young Alexander the Great; that he was a man not to be messed around with, and a man that valued bravery and so had many brave men serving him. Hiram immediately sees in David that he has a valuable neighbour who is not going to be a vassal to the Philistines, and he backs him to win real renown, with loans and goods/gifts. He backs the "right horse" and David and Solomon establish a very financially successful, and mutually beneficial relationship with the Phoenicians. Both kingdoms gain greatly from their league together, and it lasts from father to son on both sides, for nearly 70 years.

The two sons we will follow are, firstly Solomon, who will go on to found the dynasty of kings that lasts over 400 years, until the last dies in captivity in Babylon. The last of Solomon's line isn't that king however, it is an unbroken line that goes right down to Joseph, the human father who will bring up the baby Jesus as his own. There are other sons, James, Jude, Joseph, and they will have children, and the last formal written record we have of Solomon's line is when the Romans explore the risks of another "king of the Jews" coming and discover the grandsons of James and Jude are just poor farmers - no threat to Rome at all....

Solomon's line finds itself under judgment by God, and the announcement is formally made, through the prophet Jeremiah, that no son of Jeconiah will ever sit on the throne of David! **Jeremiah 22:24-30, 2 Kings**



**25:27ff.** The good news is however that another son of Bathsheba and David, Nathan, will be the ancestor of Mary, and his line is blessed in the coming of the Messiah, Son of David, not son of Solomon! **Luke 3:23-32.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Be challenged believer, for it is not the number of our physical children that are our blessing, but the character of those children, and one with character and ability is worth more than a gaggle of geese fit for nothing but someone's pot. Foolish people think children are the arrows in their quiver, and quote **Psalms 127:5**, but every fool who has quoted that verse to me over 50 years now, has had children who proved useless to them in their old age, for they had no character. Let's form character in our children, not greed, arrogance, laziness, or over confidence!

### [b] Pastoral

The best people alone make good leaders. Do not think all can be trained to be leaders, they cannot, and David's sadness is that he couldn't use most of his sons for much at all. Only in heaven will we find what the others did, but of this great list from Jerusalem, only two stand out.

David had God's clear word on the matter of multiple wives, **Deuteronomy 17:16-20**, and yet he disobeyed and did what kings did in his day. Don't feel he "got away with this", for the pleasures of the harem came back to bite him and the nation, with the murders and sexual sins that abounded and brought God's judgment.

We do not break God's Law lightly and expect no consequences – let's remind people that they may be forgiven, and will be on confession, but some consequences for sin roll on. We can live a long time to regret things.

**14:8** And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard of it, and went out against them. **9** And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. **10** And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? And wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, 'Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand'. **11** So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim. **12** And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire. **13** And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley. **14** Therefore David enquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. **15** And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines. **16** David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. **17** And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

## REFLECTION

The enemy is quick off the mark to attack David, thinking that if they strike early, they will catch him before he is well organized. God's organization is however always superior to man's work and little satanic inspired schemes, and David is ready. As we have seen earlier the men who came to David from each of the tribes were their best army units, and so David has the men, but more importantly he has the Lord with him, and his focus on the ark first has placed him in the place of spiritual power, and that opens the door to all else.

In the **2 Samuel Chapter 5** account of these events, the writer there (probably Nathan the prophet), emphasized the importance of David's enquiring of the Lord, and taking the definite and precise advice he was given by the Lord. Ezra in his account before us makes it even stronger than the Samuel account, noting David's "order" for the statues of the pagan "gods" to be destroyed by fire after the battle.

Refer to the commentary on the **2 Samuel 5** passage as you read this account here before us. I observe there the importance of seeking the Lord's face every time there is a challenge, not thinking that because you were to fight and attack last time that you are to do the same the second time.

Every day is different and every day is to be taken to the Lord. David receives different instructions this second time, and obeys. "God has gone before you". The message is crucial for Ezra's day; for the Lord is there to help them, but they must be as ruthless towards paganism as their father David was.

By obedience to the Lord, David's reputation was enhanced and all the surrounding kingdoms sat up and noticed, for he had defeated the military power that had brought Egypt to its knees two centuries before. David's reputation was that he was invincible in his Lord! His reputation was intimately associated with his relationship with God. This is the only reputation we should value – for without Him we are nothing. Let people take note that we have been, and are with Jesus. **Isaiah 43:11, Acts 4:12-14.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Let us seek the Lord's face every day. Let us not think we know what to do and how to do it, but speak to the Lord about all things every day.

### [b] Pastoral

Let us encourage God's people to be people of prayer; not trusting men and women, but trusting their walk with the Lord alone. It is only our close fellowship with the Lord and the Holy Spirit that keeps us safe.

Let us encourage God's people every day to stay safe with Jesus by speaking with Him every day, and every hour of every day.

## Notes

## CHAPTER 15

**15:1** And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. **2** Then David said, 'None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever'. **3** And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. **4** And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: **5** Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty: **6** Of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty: **7** Of the sons of Gershon; Joel the chief and his brethren an hundred and thirty: **8** Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred: **9** Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore: **10** Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve. **11** And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, **12** And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. **13** For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

## REFLECTION

Refer to the parallel passage in **2 Samuel 6** to identify the exact sequence of events, and remember that Ezra's purpose here is not to contradict the author of Samuel, but to underline the spiritual significance of the events and their implications for his own (and our own) day.

The details of the bringing in of the ark will take us two full and very detailed chapters in Chronicles, whereas the author of Samuel will only spend 9 verses on this second and successful bringing in of the ark. Ezra's

message is one of worship, and he wants the people to see the importance of having godly worship at the core of the rebuilt nation.

Ezra's first point is that David provided a place for himself to live first, then organized a proper place for the ark to rest in a tabernacle close to where the palace complex was. He was right in doing this, while the ark rested in the house of Obed-Edom. The Samuel author notes that he is blessed for his care of the ark, and that hearing this galvanizes David into bringing the ark up finally and properly. **2 Samuel 6:11-19**.

Ezra's account is one focused on the priestly preparation with the king's direction. Ezra has this information from the tribal records of Levi, and he is emphasizing the care taken this time to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Ezra emphasizes that David takes the lead to direct that the Levites were to carry the ark, and that they were set aside "forever – as long as time runs" – for this and other ministry tasks. David sends out the invitation for "all Israel" to gather; that is for all who could come with arms and supplies, to come.

He had everything prepared, including the extensive amount of food required for this meeting of all the tribes, and he was ready for all to come. He gets together with the sons of Aaron, the priesthood and the Levites well before the event to ensure all is ready and all are prepared, with the right instructions to be followed this time. He wants thoughtful and worshipful preparation, without emotionalism that might cloud judgment.

In Verses 12 – 13 David may be indicating that the priests and Levites didn't give him the right instructions last time, but that this time he wants no mistakes, and it is clear from the offerings made after six steps have been taken, that he was ready in case they got it wrong this second time also.

As I read the 2 Samuel account, I feel David's sense of relief that no-one has died this time! He is very insistent that all "sanctify themselves" to be ready for the Lord's work, and that none come with any casual attitude or passionate emotionalism, but with focused Bible based worship, where obedient action may lead to emotional expression, but it is godly all the way.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

When we are clear about what to do, before the Lord, do we pause and pray continually about the means and methods of our delivery!

Are we seeing the need to walk this closely to Jesus?

### [b] Pastoral

How holy do the Lord's people perceive the Lord's path to be when they hear us preach?

Do God's people pick up anything casual about their walk from us as the pastor? Let us be careful of our emphasis on the "fear of the Lord", for we need to be more scared than we are of getting things in this life wrong, for the stakes are eternal in significance.

**15:14** So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. **15** And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. **16** And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. **17** So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah; **18** And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters. **19** So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; **20** And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth; **21** And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azariah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel. **22** And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful. **23** And Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark. **24** And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and

**Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark. 25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. 26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. 27 And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. 28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. 29 And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.**

## REFLECTION

The Law of Moses was clear, the ark was always to be carried by Levites, and never seen or touched by any one. It was to be covered at all times it was not in position in the tabernacle, and even there it was to be untouched, just sprinkled once a year with the blood of atonement. It was the sign of the presence of God with his people and God isn't "touched" and handled by men, He is to be worshipped. Holiness and godly fear were to mark the attitude towards the ark of the presence.

Everyone did as they were directed this time. Emotionalism did not overwhelm preparation and holiness, and all played their part in holiness before the Lord. The Holy Spirit led David to ask them to ensure that some Levites were set aside for musical worship, so as to lead the people in Holy Spirit led/filled Psalm singing.

Ezra has the records of exactly who were involved in Levitical texts that survived, and we thank him for noting these things, even though we don't know the men involved, we are reminded, that God knows our service and He remembers our service. Books are written of service rendered, and they are read in heaven, and rewards given that last forever. **Malachi 3:16-18.**

The musicians and the singers are all noted, and in verse 22 we have the tutor, trainer and choir master Chenaniah mentioned. He was in charge not because he was enthusiastic, he was in charge of training because he was skilful – this wasn't amateur hour!!! We can excuse all manner of things in worship today, and excuse it as enthusiasm, or say, "they are doing their best", and yet poor music and singing has destroyed the atmosphere and the spirit of worship and ought to be confronted!

We must do better!!! We must take the care these people took after the death of Uzzah. That means all who lead worship must practise and practise, and focus on leading the worship for the people, not performing to look good on stage! No narcissistic focus – Christ alone is to be our focus in worship, not the musicians and singers, and those of stage are there to engage the congregation, not lose themselves in emotional experiences with their eyes closed.

Verse 23 and verse 24 make clear that every detail was planned, even with four men to hold the door open for the ark's passage, and close it behind the ark, and then open the tabernacle door and close it behind the ark. The trumpeters to go before the ark are noted, and they were to call the people to attention and to worship as the ark approached. The ark was to be treated as if it were the king coming, with heralds in advance so the people were on their faces in worship before it even approached opposite them on the road.

As trumpeters went before the king, so trumpeters went before the ark to announce its arrival – for it was the visible meeting place of the high priest and king with God. They were to know that God was their King forever, and his ark was coming, and all were to bow before the Lord's presence.

**Verse 25.** Worship is always with joy – for we greet our Lord with joy at his love, mercy, and grace – but it is with thoughtful and obedient holiness. **Psalms 32:11, Nehemiah 8:10, Isaiah 61:3-7.** Note that "God helped the Levites" carry the ark. For all of us in ministry there is this sense when Holy Spirit filled, that we are being helped to minister, and carried along by the power of the Lord. That is how service is to be every time we serve the Lord – we are to be "carried along" by his power. **Ephesians 5:15-21, 2 Peter 1:19-21.**

**Verses 26-27.** None in the formal party around the ark wore anything other than fine white linen, with no jewellery or ornamentation/decoration on the clothing. They wore holy garments, and David himself did not wear kingly robes, but the simple white linen of the priest, and of a noble man in penance.

David was not “naked/uncovered”, as the KJV translated it in **2 Samuel 6:20**, just not formally dressed as king. Michal in her criticism of David was wrong 100%, for her upset was that he didn't walk with the dignity pomp and “decoration” she felt he should have as a king, but she didn't realise the truth, for she lacked spirituality! He was bringing the ark into Jerusalem as a humble servant of the King of kings, and so humility, purity, and worshipful joy was appropriate, not the false dignity and pious hypocrisy of her father, the very dead king Saul! Saul died because he could not lay aside the kingly dignity for David to become king as was God's call, and here David proves worthy of the kingship, because he was ready to lay aside his robes, and worship in humility before the true King of Israel – God Almighty. **Matthew 20:25-28, John 13:13-17.**

**Verse 28.** There was national unity in this worship, and it is this spirit of unity between all the tribes that Ezra wants to build back more fully each and every day. It is unity of purpose, in and around worship that is the key thing for Ezra, and it is the key thing for God's purposes to be worked out also. **Ephesians 4:3, 13, 5:18-21.** The fruit of the Spirit is always unity – the fruit of the satanic is disunity and disorder.

**Verse 29.** Despising David in her heart sets Michal on a path to judgment, rather than blessing, for in this she showed that she did not understand the spiritual significance of David's careful preparation for this day. It tells us that sadly she is still her father's daughter, with his weakness for the “pride of life”, rather than humility and service. **1 Timothy 3:6, 1 John 2:15-17.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

How careful David and the Levites are, how much care is taken to be pure, holy and single in focus. Do we take this level of care in our worship today? – we need to!

### [b] Pastoral

David shows good managerial ability here, and he has his check list and is following it through and ticking each item off carefully and deliberately. Let us teach the Lord's servants to be more careful of the things of God than they would be with their own wedding arrangements!

## Notes

## CHAPTER 16

**16:1** So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God. **2** And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. **3** And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. **4** And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: **5** Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; **6** Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God. **7** Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren.

**REFLECTION**

**2 Samuel 6:17-19** covers this event also, and the key points are made in both passages. The offerings were made, and then all the people attending were given food to eat to celebrate the great event, and gain strength before they headed home. David was being thoughtful of the needs of the people who had walked for a great distance, and even though they will have brought provisions with them, their king wanted to express his thanks with food also.

In many cultures it is the eating of food together that unites the people and their king, and the offering of food is a balanced Middle Eastern Meal - bread, the meat, and the skin of wine (or raisin cakes – although this was unlikely – as other than war rations, raisin cakes (like our muesli/fruit bars) were associated with pagan worship – **Jeremiah 7:18, 44:19**).

Levites were appointed to record the details of the worship for posterity (Ezra has these notes made) and to lead in the worship in different ways. Instruments are mentioned, but one man, Asaph, was the man who played the cymbals. It is these little specific details that tell us the written nature of the records Ezra is working from. The priests used the trumpets/shofars to sound out and get everyone's attention for the worship songs, and David has written a Psalm for the occasion. It appears to be **Psalm 105:1-15**.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

When a major church event is planned, always think about water or other drinks, food for the hungry afterwards, and toilets for comfort. If you fail to think of these basics you are not thinking of God's people as he did! **Luke 9:12ff**. Hungry people must be fed in order to learn, and thirsty people cannot learn or even hear things until they have drunk some water.

Looking at the musical instruments we can see that there was variety and for each there were people who had become experts in playing, and so they take the lead with their chosen instrument. We all have different skills and abilities, and we need to use them to the glory of God.

**[b] Pastoral**

Do we plan as well as David did here? Think for a moment about how many people he was having to cater for here. Hundreds of thousands may have showed up for this event, and he made sure that he had enough to feed them all. That is organization that is efficient indeed, and this is our standard for anything we do.

**16:8 Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. 10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. 12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 13 O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones. 14 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. 15 Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations;**

**REFLECTION**

Sadly, this passage is in prose here, but it is a poem, and was sung by David, and possibly the whole crowd, under Levitical instruction. Go to the Commentary on **Psalm 105** and read it through and then see if you can spot any shift of emphasis as Ezra records it here. Let us notice the "orders" of the Psalm – for they are all the worship-spiritual growth instructions for his generation, and remain "standard orders" today.

1. Give thanks unto the Lord – **Philippians 4:4**.
2. Call upon His Name – **Isaiah 12:4**.
3. Make known His deeds – **Psalm 100:4**.
4. Sing unto Him – **Psalm 18:49**.
5. Sing Psalms unto Him – **Psalm 106:1**.
6. Talk together of His wondrous works – **Malachi 3:16-18**.
7. Glory in the Lord's name – **Psalm 122:4**.
8. Let all who seek the Lord Rejoice – **1 Thessalonians 5:18**.
9. Seek the Lord and His strength – **Ephesians 5:18-20**.

10. Continually seek the Lord – **1 Thessalonians 5:17**.
11. Remember God's marvellous works – **Psalms 30:4, 12**.
12. Jacob has become Israel – His chosen ones – **Psalms 14:7**.
13. He is our God – the Lord of all – His judgments will triumph in all the earth – **Ps 79:13**
14. Be mindful of His Covenant – **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**.
15. God's Word is forever – **Psalms 119:105, Hebrews 13:8, 13-15**.

Many other verses could have been chosen to illustrate these truths, and good homework for any home group would be to find two promises for each point made so far in this Psalm. Ezra's key point is powerfully made by David in verse 15; the covenant of God is forever – for the Lord never goes back on His promises. We must adjust ourselves to God, for He will not change now or forever!

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

I suspect that Ezra and Nehemiah's favourite verse from Isaiah was **Isaiah 61:3**, as it is mine, for under maximum pressure we only get our head lifted up by worship. The spirit of heaviness only lifts from our soul when we put on the garments of praise. He is indeed the glory and the lifter of our heads. **Psalms 3:1-3**.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, do we lead in worship in a way that lifts the spirit of the Lord's people?

Do we teach biblical serotonin pumping? Worship remains the most powerful serotonin pumping activity, and it will reverse even deep depression, and as the mood lifts the truth of God's Word can then stabilize the soul of the person who has lost their way. Pastor – help them! Lead them to spiritual and mental health.

**16:16 Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; 17 And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, 18 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; 19 When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. 20 And when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people; 21 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes, 22 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. (Psalm 105 ends here.) 23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation. 24 Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. 25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 27 Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. 28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 30 Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. 32 Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. 33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. (Verses 23 – 33 maybe an early version of Psalm 96.) 34 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. 35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. 36 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel forever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.**

## REFLECTION

Standing in the footsteps of giants is a powerful thing, when you see that their promises were from God, and so they are your own, as you stand in God's place for your brief walk through space-time. **Romans 8:28** only applies, and can only be positively claimed as we, "love God and are called according to His purposes in our life".

**Genesis 26:1-5** is a secure promise to Isaac, that reinforced the Abrahamic Covenant, and made it clear to Isaac that his posterity would certainly inherit the land. The last verse of the promise to Isaac is a critical one for Ezra's generation. They had the legacy of the Babylonian Exile to remind them that being sent out of the land was specific divine discipline for disobedience, and blessing in the land was God's affirmation.

Blessing came, “because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws”. Blessing will come for the returnees as they stand with the Patriarchs, in Abrahamic Faith! **Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-19.**

God’s promise to Abraham was confirmed also to Jacob. **Genesis 28:10-17, 35:9-13.** It wasn’t that Jacob had great numbers of armed men so that he could seize or hold the land; he had few people, and yet he saw that God would make him many, and deliver the promise to his sons many centuries later. We think the Lord “delays”, but He only “waits” to deliver and bless at exactly the right point on our journey through space-time. **Psalms 25:3, 130:5, Proverbs 20:22, Habakkuk 2:3, Isaiah 25:9.**

We are all “sojourners” upon the earth. We are simply “space-time travellers” heading for our eternal destiny with God forever, and the exact nature of our specific journey is in God’s hands, and all the many and varied details of our journey is in the eternal plan. Can we rest in His hands on this journey? Prayer is our way of pouring out our worries on the way. **Genesis 23:4, Hebrews 11:9, 1 Peter 1:13-19.**

Abraham and the other Patriarchs travelled through the City-States of their day, at a time when most stayed within 5 km of their place of birth. They were safe, as they moved prayerfully, taking nothing casually, and all things by prayer and clarity of thought about eternal values, rather than temporary earthly wealth and power. God defended them again and again, in Egypt, and amongst the Canaanite kings, who were all likely threatened by them. The well digging of Abraham was a sign of the tension that existed at times between their people group and the Canaanite kings, and yet the Patriarchs trusted God’s power, not their weapons. **Zechariah 4:6.**

**Isaiah 52:11** had recorded the command, “touch not any accursed thing”, and that command to avoid idolatry like the plague it was, is remembered by Ezra as he records these things. God’s hand was over them and none would touch them, but only if they did not touch evil!

As they walked with God, in godliness, so they were able to sing praise to God, and as they walked with Him, so they had more and more to praise Him for. Sing of God’s glory and good gifts, and declare to all who will hear that the Lord is the one to be feared, followed, and to have our faith invested in. The “gods” of the nations are just idols with demons behind them, and the demons can only destroy; it is only God who made the heavens and the earth. Satan and his crowd can only destroy; indeed, this is the sign of the demonic, they produce only destruction, not anything positive. Satan and his demons cannot build, only destroy, for goodness and positivity is not in his nature, nor in the people deceived by him. Demonic people destroy!

In the presence of God there is “glory and honour”, and “strength and gladness” are in the places where believers stand with God in Holy Spirit filled power. These are the Old Testament equivalent to what we know as the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 7:15-23, John 15:2-17, Romans 6:21-23, 7:4-6, 9:16-23, Galatians 5:22-26, Philippians 1:9-11, James 5:1-6.**

Give to the Lord glory/worship, and all your strength into His service. Give glory in words of praise, and all your strength in physical-spiritual service to the work He has called you to do. His mighty power will be released in our lives through the Holy Spirit’s ministries, **Colossians 1:9-18.** The “beauty of holiness” is the standard for worship for us all. Holiness is beautiful, not austere and miserable. **Psalms 96:9, John 10:10.**

**Verse 29** is the challenge of David to his generation, but also to every generation afterwards. If God has done all that He has, why do we hesitate to worship and serve? What holds us back from whole hearted service? Is it that we don’t know Him? Is it that we know so little of His Holy Word that we are ignorant of our obligations? I suspect this was Ezra’s conclusion, and was why he set so high a demand for the people to hear and obey the Word. **Nehemiah 8:1-18.**

Stand in holy awe before the Lord; feel the fear of the fragility of the universe, held together by God’s will alone. Peter gets a vision of the folding up of the universe in **2 Peter 3:10-18**, but note how he ends the terrifying vision of nuclear implosion, by urging the hearers to, “grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord”. Fear/Awe is our starting point, but not where we are to end, we always end in worship and spiritual growth. **Proverbs 1:7, 3:1-8.**

The universe is stable because it has its part to play, just as we have, and it will be wound up when God’s purpose is accomplished. **Psalms 24:1-2, 4:4-8.** Stability is a function of God’s purposes only. We are stable and focused only when we are in His will for our lives! There is stability of mind, body, and spirit only in Him!



The only stable ground is the blood soaked ground of Calvary, and every Holy Spirit led step we take is on that ground.

“The Lord Reigneth!” David reminds the people, that it is not his reign that guarantees their safety, but that God reigns over all. Man’s power is nothing, but we operate under God’s power, and His will is what is being worked out, in spite of Satan’s best efforts to distract, distort, and destroy.

He is coming to judge, and all nature knows He is king, and even the trees rejoice in their own way at His coming return. Are we not as excited as the trees? We do well to remember the words of the Communion, “until He comes”. **1 Corinthians 11:26**.

“His mercy endures forever”. Verse 34. We still exist on the earth, and stand, after so much stupid sin in our lives, and so much wasted time, only because of His mercy, grace and love towards us in Christ Jesus. Ezra and his people could sing **Psalm 103:8-18**, and so can we. Our prayer always needs to be, “Save us Lord”. Only the Lord can deliver us in our distress, and so let us join David and Ezra and cast ourselves upon Him.

Give thanks always, and never stop thanking Him for his glorious gifts to us every day. **Ephesians 5:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 2 Thessalonians 2:13**. If in doubt about what to do at any point on your brief journey through space-time, give thanks to God for all things, and keep praising His holy name. Remember, He is the “God of Israel”, and bless and pray for the nation Israel even today, for she is back, and she yet has a part to play in the drama of redemption, and it is a central part. **Zechariah 12-14, Revelation 14-20**.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Nehemiah, Ezra’s great friend, fellow satrap of the great Persian Empire, and fellow-worker in the vineyard of God, summed it up well when he said, “The joy of the Lord is my strength”. Let us express our joy in the Lord more often, and be whole-hearted in our praise every day.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, do we open the door for real worship every time we meet. Do we proclaim the Plan of God in power so that God’s people feel the rock of ages beneath their feet? Do people feel the certainties of God’s Holy Character and Gods Eternal Plan?

Do they hear from us the truths that they can rest their weary hearts and minds upon, or do they get only the words of a fragile and doomed man or woman?

Real worship flows in power from Holy Spirit grounded certainties, and they are rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Let God’s people hear the Word in power.

**16:37 So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day’s work required: 38 And Obed-edom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obed-edom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters: 39 And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40 To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel; 41 And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever; 42 And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were porters. 43 And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.**

## REFLECTION

It is lovely to note that Obed-Edom did not miss out on blessing when the ark left his house, for he left his old house also and followed the ark to Jerusalem, and with his entire extended family served as the “porters” for the tabernacle there until their deaths.

Let us go where the Lord leads and do what the Lord directs. Where the Lord is, there alone is the place of blessing, and only where He wants us will we find it! Asaph also blessed the Lord in his service as a Levite, finding his life purpose in the service of the tabernacle. Life time service is our call also – let's find it as we are now individually "tabernacles" of the Lord, and let us serve where ever we are. In this present earthly "tabernacle" we groan at times as we age, but we are here to serve until we die, and so let us do it! **2 Corinthians 5:1-11.**

Ezra makes the best of the split of the worship between Jerusalem and Gibeon, noting that Zadok the High Priest did not travel down to Jerusalem and stay there permanently; he remained in Gibeon at the "high place" altar there and worshipped with his support team there.

Many of the priests stayed there also, although he did come down to Jerusalem at times, and he was there with Abiathar when David had to flee the city after Absalom's revolt. **2 Samuel 15:24ff.** Solomon will finally unify the worship under Zadok in the new temple. Ezra's point in noting this split may be to remind the people that worship can be in a number of places, but it needs to be holy, biblical, and dedicated to God.

**Verse 40** reminds us again of Ezra's vital point; all had to be done in accordance with the Word of God. What God commanded Israel had to be fully followed through on, for all time. They were "his people", not their own, for they had been bought with the price, and the Passover Lamb spoke of God's provision forever for them. They were to respond to God's grace, that goes on forever, by praising and serving Him forever. **1 Peter 1:13-21.**

All went home after the corporate worship, and they returned to "bless their home" after the blessing they had received in the worship time. We are to bring the worship benefits back to our homes, and pray and worship in our homes. There is no alternative to bring worship into our homes, except the chaos the enemy will bring in there if we do not bring in God's presence. **Ephesians 5:21-6:4.**

#### APPLICATION

##### [a] Personal

Will we worship daily, and will we bring worship into our homes? Let us not blame the Lord for chaos at home if we have not invited the Lord in daily through our worship there.

##### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, do the people get the message that we are called to give? Abiathar and Zadok had their differences and they split their worship, but they were blessed, as they didn't get sidetracked onto personal feuds, but focused the people on God.

#### Notes

**CHAPTER 17**

17:1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains. 2 Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. 3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in: 5 For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. 6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me a house of cedars? 7 Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel: 8 And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth. 9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning, 10 And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the LORD will build thee a house. 11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. 13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: 14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established for evermore. 15 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

**REFLECTION**

Note first David's desire, for it is holy, pure and deeply and passionately desired. He wants to glorify God in building a suitable place for worship, but God says, "NO". Our desire can be good, holy, but not right for us, or simply "not for us" to do/receive. Are we ready to receive God's "no", for it is final, and if we push the line, we may receive more judgment than we can bear? God's Plan believer – not our plan! This passage forces us to confront the hypocrisy of many of our prayers – we are often simply delivering our daily shopping list to express our thanks for daily bread, and making helpful suggestions to God about where we want to go in life.... And we call it prayer, but it is pretence, thoughtlessness, or presumption.

David faces God's "NO!", and he sits long enough with it to hear God's "but...I will do...". What God gives David is far more than he could ever have asked for. We have seen this in EBCWA many times, but the most dramatic repeat of God's answer to David here is in our prayers for Africa. We stood and prayed on a wind swept wharf facing the Indian Ocean, with open hearts and an open agenda as to what God would do with us and the ministry.

Years later we were contacted by a South African prisoner who had established a Bible College in his jail, and this has built to a self-sustaining "Prison to Pastors" ministry, that doesn't need our funds or support, but values our prayers, and that they have. We would not even have thought of praying for prisoners to become pastors, but God had it in His plan, and because we prayed with open hearts it was revealed by God to be part of His plan for us! Do not limit God by staying with your desires – open your heart to God's desires for you!

God's Plan is always bigger than your thoughts. Open your hearts and minds and receive God's power and follow his direction. **John 14:12, Hebrews 2:3.** David hears God's Plans for him and he sees that they are far better than simply building a temple. **2 Samuel 7:4-17.** He sees that he can play his part by preparing for a building that he will never see built. He can be used to select the site, and he can clear it and prepare all that will be needed to do the work, and he does. He is called to Abrahamic Faith, as we are, as Ezra and the people of his day were, as they built a nation within a Persian Province, that would be ready for Messiah.

The temple is David's faith project; he gets things ready, knowing he will not see its completion, but he rejoices in playing his part. He is not depressed at God's judgment of him in not being able to build, due to the murders he was part of (Uriah....etc), he accepts God's Word and praises God for what he can do! David is thankful for forgiveness and so he doesn't waste time on regrets about what might have been, he pours his energy into what can be through God's Grace, he devotes his heart and resources to the work.

Remember from our walking through this in **2 Samuel 7**, how Nathan thinks it is so obvious for David to build a temple for the Lord to replace the temporary tabernacle he has already built, that he doesn't even think it needs a confirmatory prayer. It is a reminder to us all that we are to pray about all things, and take nothing for granted. It was normal for Nathan to think David would be allowed to replace the tent with a solid building, but he hadn't factored in one thing – what did God call for David to do, and not do, as part of his plan?

God didn't stop Nathan immediately, Ezra notes he waited for a few hours, and then came directly to him, I suspect to a surprised prophet. The word was direct and confronting. Verse 4 records the initial “no” – there is no shadow of doubt left and no “wobble room”. How often do we try to find room to negotiate with God, as if our ideas are better than His! God makes it clear to David that HE doesn't need a temple, and has been quite content through the last four hundred years to be speaking to his people from tent after tent! The original has long been worn out in use and laid up aside, and replaced by newer tents, the last of which David has had made. God doesn't need grand buildings; He wants joyfully obedient people.

God spoke to his people over 400 years and he asks Nathan to challenge David, and himself, when has God ever asked for a building? God's challenge to David is to think from where he has come, and where he is now, and remember that it is God's power alone that does it. God took David from under the stars where he kept sheep. He has lifted him up from shepherd of sheep to shepherd of Israel, and the power of God that kept him from the dangers of snakes, bears, lions and mosquitos, will keep him from evil now and focus his mind in worship. Remember the biggest danger is always from mosquitos.

As he lifted up his heart under the stars, so he is to lift up his heart now. **Psalm 4:1-4, 8:3-9**. It is God's power only that has kept him from evil men and difficulties through the years. Only God's power, plan and purpose will keep him safe into the future. God's purpose is to bring him through to glory, and through him to bring the glory of the universe to dwell amongst mankind. David's destiny is tied to the land and the people are tied to the land, and there will be blessing forever there, whatever the theologians who doubt Israel's present significance think....

The promise of God to each of us in Christ Jesus is as personal as it is expressed here to David in verse 8. God reminds David that he has been kept alive and well through many battle tests and trials, and that he has a reputation above that of others. He has triumphed over his enemies because God has been with him all the way. **Matthew 18:20, 28:20, Acts 4:31, 18:10, 23:11**. God is with us everywhere we go, and HE brings us the victories when we need them for the part we are playing in the plan of God. It is God's Plan and He knows what we need, when we need it and what is going to make us 100% successful at all points.

Trust and obey is Ezra's message from the Lord to his own and every generation. The challenge for Israel as a people group is to be quietly obedient and ready to do all that the Lord has called them to do, and they have the promise of being planted so that none will ever uproot them again. This is what Ezra is desperate for Israel to achieve – not just Judah – but all the tribes, and we see his concern in his constant reference to “Israel” not Judah, or Judea. It is this emphasis that led the founders of the modern State to select Israel as its name, not Judea. All the tribes are involved, and none are “lost” who will not be found and restored, and we see this today with the DNA reference bank being built up steadily.

Ezra reminds his people as they hear these words that God directed the Judges, for He wants order and justice, not chaos and corruption. We also have the great promise directly to David, that while he is not allowed to build a house for God's presence, God will literally “build” him an eternal house of people to stand in his line after him. What joy in heaven as David's descendants arrive and greet their great grand-father, and what joy to know their part in the family that led to Messiah.

Verse 11 reminds David that he is to die and will join his fore-fathers in heaven, but his son's descendants will produce the Messiah and the Messiah will have a kingdom without end. Now we have a challenge in verse 12, for does this refer to Solomon or to Nathan? The kingdom of Solomon had a very definite end, and that was the Babylonian Exile, where the last kings die, Zedekiah blinded in the jail, and Jehoiachin (Coniah) in jail and then finally in the palace of Babylon, but as a slave at the kings table. Ezra will finish his story by telling of their fate at the end of 2 Chronicles, so he knows it's not the line of Solomon that can fulfil verse 12, but Nathan's can, for he leads to Mary and to Jesus, although Ezra cannot know that at the time of writing. He must have wondered, how will this be fulfilled, with the apparent end of the kings?

Verse 13 contrasts what will be done for David's Messianic line, as against what has become of Saul's line. Saul's line is extinguished, but David's line will never be extinguished. The Messiah will be settled in “God's

Home”, and in “God’s kingdom”, for evermore. What is promised here is eternal, and it is a promise that has already been delivered on 100%, for the Lord sits at the right hand of the Father. The prophet Nathan makes it clear that these words are a vision from God, and so can be rested on for certainty. Ezra knows the line of Solomon is ended as kings, and he must have reflected on the meaning of this promise – but he knows God’s Character, and hears clearly that the promise is eternal. Beyond the Incarnation and the Empty Tomb we can see its truth and rejoice.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

How often have we felt so sure of a situation we didn't think we needed to pray? I have been caught in a situation as a result, where one to three million dollars have been lost! Now God has richly blessed me, and Romans 8:28 has applied 200% but the losses remain.... We are to pray about “everything”!

### [b] Pastoral

When God promises God delivers. David asked for the privilege of doing something amazing for God and God’s answer was to do something spectacular for David and us all. Let us not limit what God can do with us, but open the door to everything He wants in the plan for us.

**17:16 And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, “Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” 17 And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18 What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19 O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 20 O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God. 23 Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee. 25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee. 26 And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: 27 Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever.**

## REFLECTION

Read through **2 Samuel 7:18-29**, as it is the parallel passage to the one before us. Ezra will stick fairly closely to this passage, as it gets to the heart of David’s prayer before the Lord, and as David wrote it out for all the people to see and read, it is a “foundation document” of the Davidic House and kingdom. I would see this like the “Gettysburg Address” is to the Americans. We will note slight changes especially in verses 26-27 above, from the Samuel passage which has some more words.

Let’s begin at the end and see the changes Ezra makes first, and then go through the passage above slowly. Note in the Samuel passage there are the additional words. In verse 26, Ezra has cut out “thy words are true” just after the affirmation “thou art God”. In verse 27 he has cut out, “for thou Oh God hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever”. At first glance these omissions appear to be a problem, from what we know of Ezra and his desire for his people to express these very thoughts themselves.

On closer reflection we can see that the things omitted are not problematic at all, for they are both understood in the context of the words above; they don't need to be said, for they are understood within the context. Ezra wants us to see that certain things are “understood” by spiritual believers when they say certain things, and so when we say, “thou art God”, we understand that all God does is just, good, true, righteous, and we are to respond to God’s actions by being of the same character.

David's blessing is now seen, 600 years later as Ezra writes, as much more than the simple posterity of many sons sitting on his throne. Note how powerful Ezra sees the promise of God is now, and how sure David was of the eternal nature of that blessing. The greatest blessing in time and eternity is that we and our house are "before the Lord forever". It is eternal fellowship with God that is the most important thing for us forever.

The most stable thing in space-time is the blessing of God upon us, for it is always "forever". It is the eternal life perspective that arrests David's attention and focuses his mind. He sees that all his wealth and power as king will be simply passed on to his son and used for the kingdom, or dissipated in stupidity, for his death will end his control of what some get fixated upon as "their assets". Actually, we have no assets other than relationship with God, who alone can give us "real estate" and assets forever.... **John 14:1-6**. All else, other than our eternal rewards in Christ, are simply distractions and are to be enjoyed and used for God's kingdom, but are not to be seen as anything other than they are – temporary gifts of God to be utilized for our brief journey through space-time. **Psalms 39:4, 1 Peter 1:18-25, 2:9-12**.

Let's walk through David's prayer, as we did in 2 Samuel, but I will not refer to those notes, so that my reflection here is a mature one after ten further years of walking with the Lord through darkening days. In verse 16 we see that humility of reflection begins David's prayer – "Who am I Lord?" All we are, and all we have, is from the grace of God towards us, and reflects our part to play in the eternal plan of God that we had no part in developing. We are here to play our part, and that requires a quiet meditation upon what the Lord has actually called us to do, not what others think we should do, or even what we want to do. It's about HIM, not about us! Our lives are to be placed daily in the "Lord's hands".

David is overwhelmed at the grace given to him within the eternal plan; that he has been chosen to be the line of Messiah. It is too good to be true, and yet he sees it is true and God's grace, mercy and love are at work here.

He sees that all he has received is from God's grace, grace that he has not earned, deserved, nor has he bought this blessing by any works he has done. David begins where we must all begin, in contemplation of God's amazing grace. In verse 19 he affirms that it is God's plan not his, and the glory is David has got to know of the plan and the character of the one who is its author for his life. **1 John 5:13-20**.

In verse 18 he reminds himself of something that we too readily forget; that we are known intimately by God, and nothing in our heart is hidden from our creator. He recognizes that he lives to bring honour to God, and he has run out of words and deeds to reflect what he wants said to honour and glorify God. We have the wonderful promise of **Romans 8:26** that many don't even notice is before **Romans 8:28**. Also refer **Psalms 139:2-4, 23**. The Holy Spirit will communicate our heart directly to the Lord, especially when our thoughts and feelings are too deep to find the words to express.

There is none like God, and none like Israel, God's chosen people. We confront two vital truths here. Satan's great lie is that he is equal to God, or even has power that comes close – he does not! There is none like God! We need to get more than a glimpse of this reality, and remember that we are part of an eternal plan that is powerful and certain! We also need to remember that God has a plan for Israel, and the church's role and destiny will not usurp Israel's role and destiny, and that they will be taken up again as God's people for the last great acts before the Second Advent. **Romans 11, Zechariah 12-14, Revelation 5-20**.

We must each play our own part in the great unfolding drama of redemption. Our part doesn't stop others playing their part; indeed, each sticking to their role means all are woven into the plan by the Holy Spirit. It is Holy Spirit filled and directed living that is important. Verse 23 simply expresses David's "Amen" – "Just do it Lord – take charge of my life and all who follow me....". In verse 24 he expresses the truth clearly, that all that God does is for His Glory forever, and that is the thought that arrests Ezra's mind as an old man, and mine also as I read these edited words of David's. **1 Corinthians 2:9**.

As we get older, and more mature in our walk with the Lord, we see that all is about the glory of the Lord. We see that what God has for us is greater than anything we could ever have imagined. We start to understand that no-one will feel they "missed out" on anything in space-time, for once we are in eternity we can see all space-time, and anything we want to explore will be able to be explored.... We are in Christ forever beyond all the limitations of space and time. The wonder of that starts to grip you as you get older, and the wonder of God's weaving in our own lives arrests our mind, and worship pours out of our grateful heart.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

David gives thanks, and that is our right and privilege to do also. Let us give thanks for the divine weaver of purpose into our lives here in space-time, and providing meaning, purpose, direction and destiny forever.

**[b] Pastoral**

Do not miss the spirit of David here Pastor, for it is the standard for all believers in thankfulness. We do not praise God enough, for we are too busy asking for things that we think are needed, rather than simply orienting ourselves to God's plan for us.

God's Plan believer/pastor, not our plans. Pastors let us please teach the Plan of God so that all God's people under our care stop wasting prayer time asking for nonsense, and focus on what it is God wants us to do.

**CHAPTER 18**

**18:1** Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. **2** And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. **3** And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates. **4** And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them an hundred chariots. **5** And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. **6** Then David put garrisons in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought gifts. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. **7** And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. **8** Likewise from Tibhath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer, brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the brasen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass. **9** Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah; **10** He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to enquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and with him all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass. **11** Them also king David dedicated unto the LORD, with the silver and the gold that he brought from all these nations; from Edom, and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek. **12** Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah slew of the Edomites in the valley of salt eighteen thousand. **13** And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. **14** So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people. **15** And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder. **16** And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Shavsha was scribe; **17** And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and the sons of David were chief about the king.

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 6.** What a turn around in fortunes is expressed here, and that is exactly the message of the previous chapter also. God has truly lifted David up! The people he fled to and hid amongst and served as his liege lords, the leadership of Gath, surrender to him, and all the Philistines serve David! **1 Samuel 21ff.** Ezra's point is not to be missed at the end of verse 6, "Thus the Lord preserved David wherever he went". The word translated "preserved" is an ancient word, and means, "kept safe, opened the way, delivered, preserved, and gave victory to..." It is only as we get older that we look back and are amazed that we have been "kept" through so many otherwise dangerous events. How close are we to eternity each day believer? Answer = less than a millimetre! We are always a milli-second from the end of our life, and it is God alone that keeps us safe as we walk through this temporary space-time creation in which eternal destinies are worked out.

**Verses 7-8.** David takes loot from places, but not for simple ostentatious display, as Solomon will later sink to, but to prepare for the temple building, and he will use the metal taken as tribute for the temple building. The exception is the "Shields of Gold", which will hang on the palace walls. To David these are signs of God's favour, but this display of wealth will over time rot the heart of Solomon, as we saw in 1 Kings,

but at this point in David's reign, he hangs the shields up as a daily reminder of how good God has been to him and the kingdom. **1 Kings 10:23-29.**

**Verses 9-11.** The other kings around the area are impressed by David's strength, and even more by the fact that they can see that God is with him! They are quick to express their thanks for his protection and bring gifts, and he dedicates these to the temple project also. He is a man with a single focus; to bring glory to God and openly declare God's power, plan and purpose for the nation he leads. Ezra sees that this is the emphasis that he wants in the restored nation also, for even as a province of the Persian Empire they can have the blessing that David sought.

**Verse 12-17.** Edom is conquered and placed under David's rulership, with garrisons to keep order and collect the taxes needed to pay the armies he has. David does not bankrupt himself by building fortresses, he supports his armies and they do the work of keeping potential enemies quiet. Solomon will bankrupt the kingdom with great fortresses and mobile forces, rather than follow his father's example, and sticking with infantry and trusting the Lord!

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

David's failures through the time frame above are not mentioned at all. We often fail to reflect upon the power of **Psalm 103:8-18**. When we are forgiven, we are forgiven and God mentions our sins no more, and neither should we. David's positives are highlighted, and so are ours in heaven – sin is mentioned no more. Have we grasped this, or do we still feel what must be seen as inappropriate guilt? No guilt, no regrets, just praise and worship brethren!

### [b] Pastoral

God directs David, and he praises God for deliverances, and does not let the wealth that pours into his kingdom turn his head and heart away from his task – to get ready for the temple building. Let us challenge the Lord's people to see all they receive as gifts from God for God's glory. Let us not be distracted, nor stop preaching about the importance of focus forward to eternity. All we have is for use in the Lord's work, and all "things" are just assets to be spent in time for God's glory. The "details of life" must be seen as such, and not distract us from the work!

## Notes



**CHAPTER 19**

**19:1** Now it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead. **2** And David said, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father shewed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him. **3** But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land? **4** Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away. **5** Then there went certain, and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return. **6** And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah. **7** So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle. **8** And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. **9** And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come were by themselves in the field. **10** Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. **11** And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set themselves in array against the children of Ammon. **12** And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee. **13** Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do that which is good in his sight. **14** So Joab and the people that were with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him. **15** And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem. **16** And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that were beyond the river: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them. **17** And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set the battle in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. **18** But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host. **19** And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

**REFLECTION**

The battles against the Ammonites led to the Bathsheba incident, but this won't be mentioned. Ezra isn't "white-washing" David's sin from history, for remember, he has the documents of Samuel and Kings before him as he writes this, but he is writing from the divine perspective, and as we have noted before, once sin is forgiven, God mentions it no more. David is seen here as the conqueror he was, and he was straight shooting, and honest, and men could trust his word, for what he said he meant. There was no guile in this man, and he was a forgiven man who others would follow to the end! **John 1:47-51**.

Note the things said by Joab and Abishai here. Abishai will prove loyal to the end, but Joab is a different story, for he will do great evil all the way, and he will be kept alive only because he is such a ruthless commander. Even though Joab will go bad, especially after David's long depression after Bathsheba and then the Absalom revolt, he does express faith that is strong early on, and must be seen by Ezra's words as a great believer early on. We will be able to know how good and great he was in heaven, and David won't be troubled by him there, nor will he resent David for ordering his rightful execution!

David's honesty and desire for friendly relations is spoken evil of, and he must fight these people, but he will later be helped by them in the Absalom revolt, and that proves he treated them way better than they deserved after this great insult. **2 Samuel 17:27ff**. Verse 13 of the Chronicles passage is the key to Ezra's message from this tough old general to the people of Ezra's day. The soldiers are to do what they are called to do, and fight bravely, and act as the agents of the people at all times, but Joab is as clear as David was in his prayer before the ark. "Let the Lord do that which is good in his sight". In God's hands is the outcome, for it is God's purpose that is sought.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

David's statement to Goliath remains that of all who "stand in harm's way" in battles, where the issue is the glory and integrity of the Lord. "The battle is the Lord's". **1 Samuel 17:47**. Whatever we do, if our eyes are firstly looking upwards, we are in the right place and have the right attitude.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, let our hearts be stabilized in the Lord's purpose for our ministry. It is his glory alone that matters, and so let us always say aloud as we advance, "let the Lord do that which is good in his sight".

**Notes****CHAPTER 20**

**20:1** And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it. **2** And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city. **3** And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem. **4** And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines: at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, that was of the children of the giant: and they were subdued. **5** And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam. **6** And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were four and twenty, six on each hand, and six on each foot: and he also was the son of the giant. **7** But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him. **8** These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

**REFLECTION**

Parallel passages are **2 Samuel 12:26-31, 11:1-12:25**. Order reversed by Ezra for the theological point he is to make here. In verse 1 we are reminded that David "delayed" in Jerusalem, but Ezra goes straight to the victory he won, for the sins through this time are forgiven, and the result of the victory is what is now to be remembered.

Be careful as to how you interpret the apparent cruelty of David to the people of Ammon, for that sort of reading of David's actions does not resonate with their care for him ten years later during the Absalom rebellion. Whatever was done, was clearly punishment, but was not torture or evil, for these people were there to help David at Mahanaim, and they could have sided with Absalom and seen David die. It was Ammonite help that saved David. Our translations can make things sound far from what they were.

The Philistine Wars were annual “sporting events”, and that is exactly the way these proto-Greek-Mycenaean peoples saw warfare. For them war was a sport, and they delighted in killing their own relatives to win renown, and to kill others was even better. They lived to fight and pillage. Their religion and their behaviours were as satanic as the later Vikings were, and their 200 years reign of terror are of a similar length.

David knew how these people thought and he played the game with them, and used them, even having a very loyal guard of Philistines from Gath, and another battalion of guards from Crete or Mycenae. The day arrived however when the Lord gave him the order to defeat them totally and incorporate them into his land, and make them his vassals. This also meant that he was evangelizing them for God, undermining their paganism by leading a significant number to genuine salvation. It was a “hearts and minds” exercise.

The little details here and in Samuel are accurate, as the genes for gigantism is associated with six toes/fingers. David and his key heroes slay many of the giants of this people-group. The earlier Canaanites had some genetic inheritance of gigantism around Hebron. **Numbers 13:33, Deuteronomy 3:11-13.** Caleb asked specifically for these lands so he could be the one to knock over the giants!

The Philistines arrive and take over the Canaanite coastal cities around 1190BC, and it would be expected for them to inter-marry with the “Giant Families” to try to “breed” super warriors, and that is exactly what they did. This happened amongst the Mycenaeans also, as they tried to “breed” heroes by finding families with the gigantism genetics, capture the women, and then father children from the women in these families with their best warriors.

Ezra’s point is the same as the authors of Joshua and Samuel – giants are no threat to Holy Spirit filled believers. **1 John 4:4.** It doesn’t matter how big the “giant” is, the Lord will bring them down, and godly and obedient servants of God can have the pleasure and privilege of being used to lay the giants out flat on the ground! The last battle David fights in, nearly ends in his death, due to one of the last of these Philistine giants, Ishbi-benob, and it is Abishai that saves the king. **2 Samuel 21:15-22.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

No matter what the satanic “breeding program” and the shape, size, or apparent power of the opposition facing you, remember believer, you are the Lord’s servant. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world! **1 John 4:4** every time you face “giant despair”.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, you will face many “giants” in ministry. They are the big challenges to God’s real work from the people and groups that want you distracted. Face the “giants” of distraction, as well as the giants of depression by Holy Spirit filled living.

## Notes

**CHAPTER 21**

21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. 2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it. 3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? 4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. 5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. 6 But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab. 7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. 8 And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 9 And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, 10 Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 11 So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee 12 Either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. 13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. 14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. 15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. 17 And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

**REFLECTION**

Ezra is clear that Satan was personally behind the plan to number Israel before David's death. It was a normal thing for kings to do as they came to the end of their reign, so as to pass on to their son the full details of the kingdom, but this isn't God's way! The writer of **2 Samuel 24:1-17**, isn't so certain of the reasons, but looking back 600 years Ezra is very certain. His words echo **Job 1:6-12**, and I suspect this is deliberate. The oldest book of the Bible is Job, and the youngest of the historical books is Chronicles. The only book written after Chronicles-Ezra was the prophetic book Malachi.

Ezra's point is very clear; the enemy will target God's key people when they are doing important work. Satan cannot be in any more than one place at a time, and so it is unusual for individuals to get his attention, but David certainly was "in the firing line" around this time, as the kingdom was to be passed over to Solomon, and the task of temple building with it!

The census is opposed by old Joab, and note his words in verse 3, for they are 100% correct. This is an evil man and a murderer many times over, but so is David! Both are forgiven. Bad characters can at times tell the truth, and it pays to listen to the truth, whoever tells it. There was a debate and David ordered Joab to do this thing that he knew to be wrong. God doesn't work with numbers, He works with obedient individuals and a few good women/men can turn the tide in any situation. It's not the census of numbers or finances that matters, but the spiritual state of the nation that really mattered. Nathan or Gad, the Prophets, were the right men to call – but they were not called, and so David bears sole responsibility!

David gets this terribly wrong, and Ezra is blunt about this, even though he hasn't mentioned some of the more gross sins of David, this one is directly against God, and it is the danger of his day and our own. Ezra is being Holy Spirit led as he records this detail here. The numbers of soldiers, or men able to be called up, is over the one million mark (although remember the term "eleph" for thousands, may be a far smaller group at this time), but Joab hates this work and he doesn't even count Levi or Benjamin; he is seriously angry at the king's order, for he knows it will bring disaster. Joab did think as a believer here.

God's response was beyond the "abominable" feeling of Joab, and God judged all Israel for this sin of David. Why judge all Israel? All Israel was guilty sadly also. The majority wanted to feel great, awesome, numerous, and invincible in their power and might, whereas God wanted them to rest in His power, plan and purposes for their lives upon the earth. **Zechariah 4:6**. We do not achieve great things when we are "awesome", but when we are humble and obedient to the Word of God, and walk only in the Holy Spirit's power.

David goes before the Lord quickly, once he is convicted of the wrongness of this action, and it is only as the figures come in that he sees this was wrong. He notes the foolishness of this, in addition to the sinfulness of it. It is foolish to trust in men, rather than trust in God. God answers through the "seer/prophet" Gad, as he was one of the men who ought to have been called initially, as soon as the plan was mooted.

David had failed to think and ask God correctly for this issue, so he will be challenged by the Lord to think hard about his response now to God's judgment. He is offered three alternatives as his judgment; and each option challenges him to think about himself, his people and what will be safest for the kingdom's future. David was not clear in his thinking when he did this, will he be clear in his thinking now to end the judgment?

A three year famine may destroy the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and the same could be said of a three month rampage of the enemy through the land, and also the assessment of other kings around him will affect the nation's security for decades afterwards.

The three day, "Sword of the LORD", option is severe, but it is at least surgical, and God is directly doing it through the "Angel of the LORD" (Lord Jesus Christ), killing only those who have sinned as David did in arrogance. David knows he is responsible for this carnage, and he places himself firmly in God's hands alone.

Verse 13 is the key principle that Ezra wants his people and us to understand – if there is anything wrong, let the Lord correct us, and let us fall into his hands, but not the hands of men! 70 Groups of men fall to the pestilence. We cannot be sure of actual numbers, as the term "eleph" means "group", rather than thousand. It comes to mean thousand later in the Septuagint period after Ezra, but whatever the number it was sufficient to make the entire nation grieve for what David had let loose amongst them.

Blessing will come out of cursing here, and that is God's point for David to understand, and also for Ezra's people, and ourselves. **Romans 8:28**. The question that Paul asks of us in **Romans 8:28**, is, "Do we love God?" and, "Are we called according to His purposes for our life?" We can only claim the promise when we are sure of the answers to the two questions, for they are the corollary to the promise. Ezra's point in this story is, David asks these questions, and he answers, YES – he loves God and wants only His purpose. Do we?

The city of Jerusalem is a really important target for God in this judgment, for the people there have apparently led in the sin, but the Lord stops the judgment over the threshing floor of Arunah/Ornan the Jebusite. The anthropopathism is used, that "God repented", and changed his mind, but that is the expression of the way the action is seen from man's perspective in space-time, whereas, from eternity this was always the plan, and the judgment stop point was over what would be the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple. God's Eternal Plan is working out, but from man's direction it looks like a change of mind.

Let us be cautious of following liberal theologians here, for they delight in speaking about man's developing idea of a "god", whereas the truth is God's actions have to be accommodated to man's language and we need to be careful that we are not speaking as if God is actually changing his mind, for such a thought is a nonsense, and yet it appears to be that way from our perspective in space-time. Only when we are in eternity, beyond present limits will we fully understand this. Don't get upset about this, it just means we are human! We are creatures, not the creator!

Verse 16 reminds us that David led the elders of all the tribes in penance, and all were appropriately wearing sackcloth and grieving for their corporate sin of presumption and arrogance in numbering the people. David is the leader however and he must shoulder the personal responsibility for the action and personally confront its consequences. **Psalms 51**. The king rightly asks for the Lord to judge him and his house for this great sin of presumption, and God will answer this prayer, for Solomon's arrogance will be judged and his line will create the breakup of the tribes within forty years, and it is Ezra who re-united the tribes in his day.

## APPLICATION

**[a] Personal**

Ezra hated arrogance and self-righteous self-assurance above all else, for it led foolish men away from humility and obedient service. Only humility will be used by God; arrogance has only a place on Satan's team. Ezra sees that the enemy of mankind specifically enticed David and he stupidly accepted the sinful thought and acted on it.

David's tenacity in following through on the sinful activity, even though challenged, indicates its satanic origin and strength. David needed to have this evil expunged from his life, and the nation's over confidence with so many battles won also had to be knocked out of them. They had to be taught that only God gives victory!

Awesome self-confidence isn't a sign of great psychological health, it is a sign of stupidity awaiting a disaster! Forgetting you are limited creatures, and thinking you know more than you do is potentially fatal.

When we claim **Romans 8:28**, we need to remember that it applies only as we orient our lives to God's plan for us, not our ideas of right and wrong!

Are we still loving God with all our heart, and are we called according to his purpose for our life? Only then can we relax in God's will for us.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, others get hurt by the leader's errors. Deal with your stupidity quickly, confess your sins promptly and return to God's path as fast as you can!

When we have led others into error, expect the Lord to provide a test as part of the solution, and HE will expect you to think biblically this time!

**21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. 20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. 22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. 24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. 25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. 27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. 28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.**

**REFLECTION**

**2 Samuel 21:18-25.** Read this section closely, and see the expanded version below. Ezra is underlining things here that are especially relevant to the priesthood.

David is directed as king to approach the Angel of the LORD, sword still in the angel's hand, and set up an altar of stones on the very spot that the angel stopped. Gad spoke "in the Lord's name", giving directions to the king and David obeyed precisely, moving forward ready to build the altar. While this is going on the owner of the threshing floor and his sons were threshing wheat, and they also see the angel and flee and hide.

David must express faith, as the man responsible for the plague, and the most deserving of death; he must boldly approach the place where the angel stopped and quietly prepare to do what is ordered. As David approaches, Ornan comes out of hiding and bows to the king. This is a reminder that when the city fell to David and Joab twenty years before, the Jebusites were not all killed, and many are still there, and still owning land around about.

This is amazing, and is in contrast to England after the conquest by the Normans in 1066, when much of the land of the Anglo-Saxons was seized by the Normans and redistributed to their friends and allies. To lose in war at this time was often to lose everything, but David is not like the pagans around him, he shows mercy and grace, as he has been shown it by God.

The land isn't David's and even though king he doesn't presume to seize it, as the Normans did. David asks this Jebusite for the title deeds, for a considerable amount of money. The confusion about the amount paid isn't a problem when you consider the nature of this northern area above the old city. It is a farmlet, and the threshing floor is the high point of it, and David needs the whole area, but must first buy the threshing floor for the altar. The smaller amount of money paid is for the floor, and the larger amount here mentioned is for the entire farmlet.

Note the principle behind David's payment in verse 24. Ornan is being diplomatic, as he knows kings can demand anything, and it is better to offer what is wanted than be killed for land you cannot hold onto against the will of the king! Naboth forgot this principle and died. **1 Kings 21.**

David will not take what he cannot pay for, nor will he give to God what he has not earned. An offering to the Lord must be honestly gained by one's own work. Anything less than this is not acceptable to God as an offering. David is responsible for the plague and he must pay the full price for the remedy, and God has already provided for this in the earlier blessings David has enjoyed. It is still all grace, for God has given everything to David that he will use.

The answer to David's prayer is dramatic, as it needs to be, as a testimony that the plague is stopped and the land free of judgment. This fire from heaven is going to be repeated in the days of Elijah, 1 Kings 18, and this passage records the facts that may be behind Elijah's confidence that day. He knew that when God needed to do something dramatic, then God would do it.

David does not appear to be aware of what will occur, but he obediently sets up the altar and ensures the sacrifices are offered in order, and prays in front of the altar, and the fire falls – it doesn't appear that he asks for it to fall, he simply stands back and prays and God either lights the fire, or more likely consumes all the sacrifices on the altar. It is also not clear whether David alone offers these offerings, or the High Priest assists, but is not mentioned as he operates under David's direction. Later kings will be punished severely for personally offering sacrifices which the priests alone were to offer.

Ezra specifically now tells us that this is done with the altar of burnt sacrifices still at Gibeon, and it will operate there until Solomon unites the worship in the new temple years later. Ezra's observations in verses 28-30 remind us that the worship of the nation was split between two sites; David's tent in which was the ark, and the old tabernacle at Gibeon where all the annual feast day sacrifices and holy day rituals were carried out. He specifically doesn't mention the ark, but his comments here indicate that David ceased entering the tabernacle from this point onwards, just in case the angel was there with his sword out again.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

It is easy to relax too much in the spiritual walk through this brief life of ours. We can feel too secure and safe at times, and we are in danger then. While Satan cannot be everywhere, his team of demons, in the millions, can be and we can be attacked – but remember **1 John 4:4.**

If we are being urged to follow another path, it is wise to sit with our previous decision and reflect upon it biblically. We need to be right before the Lord, not casual and cool before men!

### [b] Pastoral

Courage is called for from the leader. Courage to admit foolishness, and courage to face consequences. Let us stand like David in the place of open repentance.

**CHAPTER 22**

**22:1** Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel. **2** And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. **3** And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; **4** Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. **5** And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. **6** Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel.

**REFLECTION**

David is led by the Spirit to announce the truth here, that while the tabernacle was still functioning in Gibeon, its days were numbered, for this was the altar of God, and he set himself the task of preparing all that would be needed to build the temple. He was not allowed to build the temple, as noted in 2 Samuel, but he could do all short of that, and make Solomon's task a little easier. Solomon will require vast additional supplies, but David had laid up a great deal.

He gathered the skilled foreign masons and they started cutting the great stones from the Jerusalem Stone quarries close by the city. These standard sized blocks would be needed to make the foundations and surrounding walls. Many hundreds of great stones would have been needed to level out the hill and make a platform upon which the temple could then be built. Vast quantities of iron were also needed for fastenings and nails. Brass was needed for the various implements, and for the casting of the surrounds of the pillars, and significant quantities of it ready for smelting to the right shapes.

David also starts to gather the cedar wood for the beams, so that they can be pre-cut to standard sizes and cured on site. Recently, cedar has been found on the temple mount, and archaeologists are trying to get dates for it, but they are as solid as the day they were built into the mosques on the site. The timber has the signs of being reused, and may be 1400 or more years old. This timber lasts and needs to be cured before building so that it doesn't warp. Some timber cannot be stacked and left without deteriorating, but Cedar needs to be laid aside ready for use up to ten years before it is built into buildings.

Solomon was still a teenager when these things were happening after Absalom's Rebellion, and David was determined to lay up as much as possible to help his son. In effect it was David and Solomon's temple. "He prepared abundantly before his death"! He then calls the young man in and gives him God's directive – build the house of God. A prophetic word always requires work – beware of those who hear or "tell" prophetic words that are fluffy – when God speaks there is something to do.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Do we prepare abundantly for the Lord's work? Are we stingy in preparations we make?

David was not allowed to do the job, but he could prepare so another could build. Do we have a sense that we will do anything we can to advance the work of the Lord?

Let us be the people who are known for their willingness to advance the work, without worrying about who gets the credit.

**[b] Pastoral**

David was organized, and he was ready to do whatever was able to be done in advance to assist his son later. Let us get our organization right.

**22:7** And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: **8** But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood



abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. 9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. 10 He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. 11 Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. 12 Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. 13 Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed. 14 Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto. 15 Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. 16 Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee. 17 David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, 18 Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people. 19 Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.

## REFLECTION

Solomon is given the task to complete, but he has both the resources in material and in people. He will make this project his own, but we will note that the power, wealth and opportunities for pleasure overcome him.

It is too easy to judge Solomon by how he ends, but at this point let's see how he begins, and how he advances in the early years, for he is devoted and attends to his father's charge to him. Solomon is an example of "Spiritual – Carnal - Burnout"; he starts very well but gets distracted from the true path.

David shares the most intimate things with his son, and the most painful thing for David is not being allowed to build the temple – even though he knew why and accepted God's judgment upon him. He had the desire, and he took that desire before the Lord, and the Lord over-ruled due to his warrior nature and his spilling of so much blood, and that is not a reference to the people who needed to be killed for the safety of the realm, nor is it blood itself, for the entire sacrificial system depended upon the blood shed. The issue was David's shedding of blood that ought not to have been shed. He was forgiven but disqualified from certain things.

Solomon is told that he is the "son of promise" to build the temple, and that his name was given to the couple in advance as a testimony of the job he was to do. He was apparently brought up with this knowledge, and the task given to him from the very beginning. Remember he is only around ten years of age when the Absalom rebellion occurs, and it was a very close-run thing, and this young man knows that God delivered them all through that time, and he needed to remember, he was anointed for a task – so he was to have no distractions!!! **1 Timothy 1:12-20, 2 Timothy 2:3-26.**

The throne of his kingdom will be established forever. His descendent Joseph will win the battle that Solomon lost; Joseph will humbly serve all his life and will bring the young Jesus up to full manhood with the dignity and lack of distraction that is required. In verse 11 David blesses Solomon with the phrases used that are needed for him to meditate upon all his life. As he does meditate upon these words he does well, and as we will see below, his prayers as king are initially absolutely correct and show a single and wholehearted devotion to God.

Verse 12 makes the issue even clearer about what is in David's mind; Solomon will need special wisdom to do the job, and he prays for that, and Solomon himself will pray for that also.

Ezra believes it is David's prayer for his son that sets him on the right path, and I suspect Ezra wants us to feel that it is David who makes Solomon great by his example and prayers for him. Think about Ezra's big message to his own people – set examples to your children and pray for your children! "Keep the Law of the Lord your God", and bring your children up in the fear of the Lord, so if they fall it is not due to you.

Verse 13 is a “standing order” of God to all believers down the ages. Any spiritual or other form of prosperity is always purposive; we have God’s gifts given to us in order for us to pour them out in God’s service. Nothing is received by the believer in time that isn’t to be poured out for his glory, with the mental attitude of the soldier in battle under the eyes of his commander. **1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 6:10-20, 2 Timothy 2:1-4.**

David notes that even in the midst of troubles he has been preparing the temple project. Nothing distracted David and nothing must distract Solomon from the task ahead of him, and the young man will do well in early days, until he gets distracted by the women of the harem and the nation’s wealth. He will fail to obey Moses words in **Deuteronomy 17:14-20** and he and the people will pay with the disaster that unfolds afterwards.

Note the last words of verse 16, “Arise therefore and be doing, and the LORD be with thee”. All too many of us are sitting on the premises, rather than standing on the promises, and then moving out into active obedience. “ARISE!” **Ephesians 5:14-21**. Let us get moving and obey the Lord, and so win the glory for the Lord that we are here to do. We are to be active, not passive. Some are called to a ministry of prayer, and even they are to be “active” in prayer, arising at midnight if called by the Holy Spirit to pray through issues.

The princes of all the tribes are briefed by David in Solomon’s presence. They are reminded that God has used David to give them peace from enemies, and that peace was given to enable the message of salvation to go out through tabernacle and then temple to all the world.

Through this building and the witness of Solomon’s early reign Ethiopia will be blessed, southern Arabia will be blessed through the Queen of Sheba. Many nations will hear of God and be challenged through Solomon’s early obedience. The princes are to remember what David did for them in warfare, and give thanks by obeying his son.

Verse 19. “Set your heart and soul to seek the Lord your God...” I am saddened as I read these words, for Solomon and for all who suffered because he failed to do this, but also, I am sad for those I minister to, for they also fail in their own destiny when they fail to advance in service and worship as they ought. Guard your soul and guard your mind – then you will be pure in your focus. Do we let the garbage of this world into our soul and mind and then wonder why we wander astray?

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

We can be disqualified from things if we do not get some details right, and some sins appear to permanently disqualify us from some tasks. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 makes it clear that there are things that destroy a person’s witness in their community and close the door for pastoral ministry. Let us all be careful in our lives of falling into paths that limit or eliminate future opportunities.

Verse 13 gives us our “Daily Orders”. We are not to be distracted or dismayed, for God has given us a task to be done, and it must be done in wholehearted and single-focused service. Our motto through this life must be, “No Distractions”. Whatever battles are to be fought, let us fight them, and then throw ourselves back into the tasks we have been given to complete. We are to say “Amen” with action, not goofy looks and pious phrases said to each other. When we say to each other, “Go in peace” we are to go out and bring peace ourselves!

Guard your heart and mind believer, lest the enemy win easy victories over you through the distractions of the world. **Philippians 4:7, Colossians 3:15-16, James 4:8, 1 Peter 3:15-18.**

### [b] Pastoral

Are we earnest enough in our warnings? Do God’s people hear the seriousness of our warnings and do they see in our eyes our desire for their good?

Are we as blunt and straight in our talking and preaching as we ought to be? Do the people get the messages? Be “wholehearted”, “single-focused”, “no distractions!”

**CHAPTER 23**

23:1 So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. 2 And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. 3 Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. 4 Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges: 5 Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith. 6 And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, namely, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 7 Of the Gershonites were, Laadan, and Shimei. 8 The sons of Laadan; the chief was Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three. 9 The sons of Shimei; Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These were the chief of the fathers of Laadan. 10 And the sons of Shimei were, Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei. 11 And Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; therefore they were in one reckoning, according to their father's house. 12 The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13 The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever. 14 Now concerning Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi. 15 The sons of Moses were, Gershom, and Eliezer. 16 Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief. 17 And the sons of Eliezer were, Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18 Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief. 19 Of the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20 Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah the first and Jesiah the second. 21 The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. The sons of Mahli; Eleazar, and Kish. 22 And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their brethren the sons of Kish took them. 23 The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three. 24 These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever: 26 And also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27 For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: 28 Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; 29 Both for the shewbread, and for the fine flour for meat offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size; 30 And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even; 31 And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD: 32 And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the LORD.

**REFLECTION**

The actual events surrounding Solomon becoming king were fraught with intrigue and danger to his life, from another older and useless brother. Satan doesn't have the best people to call on, but their arrogance makes up for their lack of ability!!!! Absalom, Adonijah, Sheba, ...all were petty minded fools, who each thought that they had more brains than they did, but their rebellions against God's clear will, led to many needless deaths. We must move quickly against evil, by prayer and focused ruthless action. **1 Kings 1-2.**

The next sections we wonder at, as we have no interest in these lists of names, and many never open this book of Ezra's because of the great lists of names, but remember his purpose and rejoice for and in our brother's "roll calls of glory" in this.

Ezra lists these so that they are recorded here in Scripture, so that forever the roll call of glory might be powerful and proclaim the greatness of God and the importance of the obedience of men.

This section reminds us that David took a real interest in worship, as a Psalm/song writer and singer, and player of instruments, and he organized the singers amongst the Levites. He wasn't their choir master, but he ensured they got the message about the importance of their playing and their singing, and he organized the making of the instruments so they were as good and pure in their sound as was possible.

David is also the one who starts the process of dividing the worship up so that the priests and singers/musicians have set "shifts", with time on and time off for rest and recharge. David is the "Father of health and safety"....

His organizing was specific, and tailored to the numbers of people available for the task to be done sustainably without burnout or boredom. Verse 11. If there were not enough people to do the job, he re-arranged things to ensure there was equality of effort required between the groups, and that it could be done. Aaron's family alone was to be the priests, and this was a permanent thing, and so his sons only were to be the priesthood, and great care had to be taken to ensure that the right people fulfilled the right roles, as God had directed Moses.

Ezra is clear that some families were to be based "in Jerusalem forever". They were to commit to the city and stay there, generation after generation, and this will be important after the Exile, and Nehemiah and Ezra have to work hard to build the population of Jerusalem up to the level it needs to be to function as the national worship centre, and also protect itself. The tabernacle was not to move any more, it was to be permanently based in the temple at Jerusalem. There was to be no more wandering.

God's presence was to be there, and the city of Jerusalem was to be a lighthouse on the hill for all nations. The temple was to be their sole focus as a nation, for through it God's purpose was that all nations hear the truth and were to be challenged to walk in it forever.

Training was undertaken in arms and spiritual duties until age twenty and then service began. Verse 24. This age of accountability from **Numbers 14:20-29**, reminds us of the Kadesh Barnea rebellion, and God tells them bluntly at that time, that they have rebelled, to that point ten times, against the evidence of miracles, and the visible presence of the Shekinah Glory!!!!

By age twenty men were expected to serve and operate in the Army, and temple and tabernacle, although in Ezekiel's day the training for the priesthood was apparently not begun until 25 years of age. The message of the Lord, and Ezra to God's people is; that the Lord uses prepared people, who have used their years to ready themselves for service, and are focused on the Lord's call over their life alone.

The Levites had their support function to do for life, and they were not to lift themselves up and try to become the high priests, for their role was to support the Aaronic priesthood. It was this readiness to serve permanently in the Number 2 place that sets the mature believer apart from the make-believer. **Numbers 16, Judges 17-18.**

Readiness to serve where you are called by God, and not try to do other's work for fame or fortune is the challenge. We are not to "lift ourselves up", but rather allow God to lift us up, when and where He decides. Satan prowls about, seeking the proud and arrogant to destroy by their presumption! Arrogance and desire for fame, glory or position, opens the door to destruction. **1 Peter 5:5-10.**

The Levites were to do the sacred baking of the bread for use in the sacrifices in its different forms, each one that spoke of the person of the Messiah and his perfect nature and work. They were to stand every morning and every evening and, "praise the Lord", and to undertake their part in the sacrificial system with focus and worshipful attention. They were to play their part before the Lord. That is our challenge also!

Can you see brethren the seriousness of Ezra's focus on these things, for he wants the people re-establishing temple worship properly in his day to "get it right" in its form and substance, and in the worshipful mental attitude of all involved. Messiah was coming, and he had Daniel's seventy week timetable for this! **Daniel 9:24-27.** He wanted the temple functioning as the perfect pointer to Messiah when He came.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

David finally appoints Solomon officially, but it is the obedience of Bathsheba and Nathan that carry the day. We are all to play our assigned part to ensure that what God wants is what occurs. Let us walk prayerfully and carefully, fulfilling our part in the plan. Ezra wants us to see that the standards of God do not change, and that we accommodate ourselves to God, He doesn't change His standards to suit our political mood.

David is careful to ensure no-one is overloaded, nor any under-employed, but each challenged to do their work with the utmost professionalism and spiritual passion. Let us be focused ourselves as David was. Neither Burnout, nor Boredom are spiritual! We are not to be alcoholics or workaholics – but Spirit filled workers who pour their hearts out for the Lord's glory, feeding and protecting the Lord's people. John 21.

Relaxed service in the place of God's calling is what we are asked to do for our whole life. We are to faith-rest our lives into God's path for us, and serve there to God's glory. There is no safe path through space-time other than the one the Creator has chosen for us in eternity past. Our eternal rewards rest only within the path chosen, and there is lasting eternal blessing only where God wants us. Let us find that path and relax into God's plan with joy.

#### **[b] Pastoral**

How clearly do the people of God hear the policy of God from our lips Pastor? God uses prepared people, and our call is to remind young believers to train in all things they are led into, always thinking and praying about how God can use their many skills for His glory later in their lives. Let us keep all the Lord's people asking the right questions! That is – what is God doing here? What does God want me to do now, so that now and always I am ready to do whatever I am called to do?

#### **Notes**

### **CHAPTER 24**

**1** Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. **2** But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. **3** And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. **4** And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. **5** Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. **6** And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. **7** Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, **8** The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, **9** The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, **10** The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, **11** The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah, **12** The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, **13** The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, **14** The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, **15** The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Apses, **16** The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel, **17** The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, **18** The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. **19** These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him. **20** And the rest of the sons of Levi were these: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah. **21** Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first was Isshiah. **22** Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. **23** And the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. **24** Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. **25** The brother of Michah was Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. **26** The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno. **27** The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. **28** Of Mahli came Eleazar, who had no sons. **29** Concerning Kish: the son of Kish was Jerahmeel. **30** The

sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers. 31 These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren.

## REFLECTION

Ezra reminds us of Nadab and Abihu's great sins of presumption and their deaths before the Lord – all so unnecessary and foolish. **Numbers 3:1-4, Leviticus 10:1-20.**

Notice how careful Moses was, and how totally sinfully stupid these two men were, and even their surviving brothers were not careful enough at this time. Ezra's point in Chronicles is to seriously underline, again and again, that no mere man or woman must ever presume to change the Word of God to suit themselves, or add to it, or do things not directed by the Lord.

All things were done, "as the Lord had commanded them...." Verse 19. They served as the Lord led, and worked with David to ensure that things were fairly divided up according to the human resources available. They "cast lots" for some tasks, so that the "fall of the lot" would allow the Lord to decide who did what, and so none might think that there was favouritism.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

We are here to serve the Lord, and follow orders received, not think we know more than the creator. The older I get the more I reflect on God's words to the "friends" of Job in chapter 42 of Job. They thought they knew so much, and they were recognized as the great theologians, and yet all they said is certified by God to be nonsense! Not just wrong, they were dangerously wrong, for their theories played with the heart and mind of Job.

Jesus told us very clearly that, he came to "bring Life and that more abundantly". **John 10:10.** All that moves us away from complete trust and obedience to the Lord is dangerous ground we are moving to. The Lord wants us blessed, and we are blessed the closer we are to Him. There is no guilt, doubt, fear or anxiety that cannot be taken to Him and extinguished by his love within his plan for our life. We are "Beloved" and we build our resilience in resting in this place of total acceptance.

### [b] Pastoral

Paul will call the Corinthian church to do all things, "decently and in order", **1 Corinthians 14:40.** Pastors, note carefully, that God is the author of order and decency, for God is holy and all that is done to His Glory is done in holiness, and calmness is an essential element of holiness. If there is chaos and disorder the enemy is present – go to prayer immediately.

## Notes

**CHAPTER 25**

**25:1** Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: **2** Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. **3** Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD. **4** Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth:

**5** All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. **6** All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. **7** So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight. **8** And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. **9** Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve: **10** The third to Zaccur, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **11** The fourth to Izri, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **12** The fifth to Nethaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **13** The sixth to Bukkiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **14** The seventh to Jesharelah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **15** The eighth to Jeshaiiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **16** The ninth to Mattaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **17** The tenth to Shimei, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **18** The eleventh to Azareel, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **19** The twelfth to Hashabiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **20** The thirteenth to Shubael, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **21** The fourteenth to Mattithiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **22** The fifteenth to Jerimoth, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **23** The sixteenth to Hananiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **24** The seventeenth to Joshbekashah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **25** The eighteenth to Hanani, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **26** The nineteenth to Mallothi, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **27** The twentieth to Eliathah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **28** The one and twentieth to Hothir, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **29** The two and twentieth to Giddalti, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **30** The three and twentieth to Mahazioth, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: **31** The four and twentieth to Romamtiezer, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve.

**REFLECTION**

More names.... I hope that by now you do not sigh loudly, or even softly when the names of your spiritual family in heaven are listed. Are we seeing this as God wants us to yet? Every name here is a brother in the Lord, and even though we can't picture them now, we will know them in heaven, for there "we will know as we are known". **1 Corinthians 13:12**. They know us now, and cheer us on from heaven. **Hebrews 12:1-3**.

Note the care taken by fathers to train their sons in the work that was to be done to God's glory. The prophets and singers were trained to be "cunning", and that means expert in their skill levels, not negatively devious! They trained to be expert and they gloried in their performance, "as unto the Lord". **Ephesians 5:22, 29, 6:7-8, Colossians 3:16-24**. They also "cast lots" so that the tasks were assigned by the Lord, not by favouritism of a controlling priest who massaged the rosters....

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Let all things be done as expertly as is possible with practise and focused attention to the task, to the glory of God. We are not here to "perform" like prima donnas, but we are here to perform as the children of God, who are loved, and whose sole desire is to express their love towards God.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors let us train our people in all they do. Let's run a preacher's class, and a singer's class, usher's class, and carpark greeter's class, and let each and every one know that they are to do their job before the Lord as a testimony to the grace, mercy and love they have received from the Lord. Let us also make sure that we do not play favourites in assigning tasks.

**CHAPTER 26**

**26:1** Concerning the divisions of the porters: Of the Korhites was Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. **2** And the sons of Meshelemiah were, Zechariah the firstborn, Jediel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, **3** Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh. **4** Moreover the sons of Obed-edom were, Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth. **5** Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: for God blessed him. **6** Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout the house of their father: for they were mighty men of valour. **7** The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad, whose brethren were strong men, Elihu, and Semachiah. **8** All these of the sons of Obed-edom: they and their sons and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, were threescore and two of Obed-edom. **9** And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen. **10** Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; Simri the chief, (for though he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him the chief;) **11** Hilkiyah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brethren of Hosah were thirteen. **12** Among these were the divisions of the porters, even among the chief men, having wards one against another, to minister in the house of the LORD. **13** And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers, for every gate. **14** And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward. **15** To Obed-edom southward; and to his sons the house of Asuppim. **16** To Shuppim and Hosah the lot came forth westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward. **17** Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two and two. **18** At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar. **19** These are the divisions of the porters among the sons of Kore, and among the sons of Merari.

**REFLECTION**

The “Porters” role was varied, from what we might call the “gofor” (to “go for” whatever they were asked to get...), to security for the doors, and opening and closing the doors to keep Levite and Priestly hands free for their tasks. They could be seen as the “Janitor” of the temple, ready to sweep and clean as required also. Note in the continuation of the chapter on the next page that some men were specifically tasked with keeping accounts, and guarding assets. All had tasks and all served the Lord through them. So do we!

In the Navy we were trained as officers to do every task that could be assigned, including every task we would order others to do. We started by cleaning urinals, toilets and showers and floors everywhere. We scrubbed, polished and disinfected and got our hands dirty, and did it without complaint. Our old World War 2 Chief Petty Officers explained why we were doing this, but only once we were doing it with a smile and no complaints.

They explained that the nearest land at sea is often one mile straight down! All aboard the ship had to do everything, without anger, resentment or complaint, so that each knew that the other person, whatever their rank, would cover for them if they were hurt or killed. We were also told, that no-one must give any order that they had not first obeyed themselves at some point. They explained to us the nature of real “power of command”, and it is a nebulous thing, but immediately felt by people in crisis situations. It is the quiet confidence of the person who can take charge and direct things, because they have “been there”, and they have “been there” with God, and are relaxed about the outcome of all things.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Like the porters, we must be ready to do all things, in the filling of the Holy Spirit, with joy in our heart and relaxation in our body. Nothing is to be beneath us in ministry. Whatever needs to be done is to be done with a hymn or psalm in our heart and on our lips.

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastor, are you ready to clean the toilet floor, vacuum, polish and praise-pray as you do so? Let's be mentors of humble service – that is the Lord's service. If anything is “beneath you”, you are unfit for the Lord's service, for he washed the disciples feet! A slaves task! **John 13!**



**26:20 And of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things. 21 As concerning the sons of Laadan; the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers, even of Laadan the Gershonite, were Jehieli. 22 The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, which were over the treasures of the house of the LORD. 23 Of the Amramites, and the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: 24 And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures. 25 And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiah his son, and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. 26 Which Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated. 27 Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD. 28 And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated; and whosoever had dedicated any thing, it was under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren. 29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges. 30 And of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, men of valour, a thousand and seven hundred, were officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward in all the business of the LORD, and in the service of the king. 31 Among the Hebronites was Jerijah the chief, even among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead. 32 And his brethren, men of valour, were two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.**

## **REFLECTION**

The treasury was placed in charge of nominated men who had personal charge of the goods dedicated to the Lord. Personal accountability is the standard for the Lord's work. When anything is dedicated to the Lord's work we are to guard it with our lives and ensure full accounting is conducted with transparent reporting of everything.

These men are named and honoured, and others later in 2 Chronicles will be noted as failing to fulfil their responsibility in this area. There are lists of honour and lists of shame, and in the church today we need to hold all servants of the Lord accountable for all the things of God. All spoil taken in the wars that the Lord enabled them to win was to be dedicated to the Lord, for the upkeep, maintenance and provision of the temple worship.

David specifically appoints men from Hebron to rule over the smaller tribes to the far north, as they are "men of valour", and their battle strength will stabilize and strengthen the weaker tribes. There have been troubles there after the Absalom Revolt and David puts his best men to the task of re-uniting the tribes and strengthening those who have wavered.

## **APPLICATION**

### **[a] Personal**

Remember, whatever needs to be done is to be done with a hymn or psalm in our heart and on our lips.

All accounting and administration can be discounted as "not as important as preaching", but it is stewardship, and as such is vital to the preaching and teaching. Let us honour all tasks and pay attention to all.

### **[b] Pastoral**

Pastor, are you ready to oversee the finances, and praise-pray as you do so? Let's be mentors of humble service in all administrative areas of church life – that is the Lord's service.

**CHAPTER 27**

27:1 Now the children of Israel after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand. 2 Over the first course for the first month was Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 3 Of the children of Perez was the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month. 4 And over the course of the second month was Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course was Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise were twenty and four thousand. 5 The third captain of the host for the third month was Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 6 This is that Benaiah, who was mighty among the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course was Ammizabad his son. 7 The fourth captain for the fourth month was Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 8 The fifth captain for the fifth month was Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 9 The sixth captain for the sixth month was Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 10 The seventh captain for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 11 The eighth captain for the eighth month was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarahites: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 12 The ninth captain for the ninth month was Abiezer the Anetothite, of the Benjamites: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 13 The tenth captain for the tenth month was Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarahites: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 14 The eleventh captain for the eleventh month was Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 15 The twelfth captain for the twelfth month was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 16 Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites was Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maachah: 17 Of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok: 18 Of Judah, Elihu, one of the brethren of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael: 19 Of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel: 20 Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah: 21 Of the half tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner: 22 Of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These were the princes of the tribes of Israel.

**REFLECTION**

We would refer to these men listed here as the Territorial Army Commanders, and each served for a month on active service, with eleven other Army Corps ready for call up if a major invasion loomed. The system David used is an interesting one, not used today anywhere as far as I know. Each tribal unit was tasked with a month to be on duty for. As it is a lunar calendar at this date, this would rotate naturally each year in different stages of the agricultural cycle, although if these were fixed rosters, some units would become better in different weathers, and that may have been a benefit for David. We are not fully sure of this.

The Corps Commanders are the “Princes” of Israel, the battle leaders of their tribes for part of the reign of David. Each of these men controls units that vary in size, but were for their month the “Ready Reaction Force” that was in camp, standing to their arms, ready for any crisis, with the eleven other units ready to be called from the fields to action if required. This meant David had a considerable force on duty at all times, with all units exercised in the field one month a year, and ready to work together.

Remember the term translated “thousand” in our text is “eleph”, and had a variable meaning through this time. By the days of the Greek translation of the Hebrews text in the 280s BC the term did mean “thousand”, but in this day, 300 years before, let alone in Moses day (1100 years before, and David’s day 600 years before Ezra) it could mean any cohesive group.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

Whether we are soldiers or officers in the Lord’s army, are we ready to work together with others at all times? Are we ready to put some time in each day, month or year? Do we volunteer for additional duties to keep our minds sharp and our skills honed to a fine level? Are we as fit as we can be?

**[b] Pastoral**

Pastors, are you training your various “units” in the church to work together well, but also to operate alone and in specific contexts well?

**27:23 But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. 24 Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David. 25 And over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, was Jehonathan the son of Uziah: 26 And over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground was Ezri the son of Chelub: 27 And over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite: 28 And over the olive trees and the sycomore trees that were in the low plains was Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil was Joash: 29 And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds that were in the valleys was Shaphat the son of Adlai: 30 Over the camels also was Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses was Jehdeiah the Meronothite: 31 And over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagerite. All these were the rulers of the substance which was king David's. 32 Also Jonathan David's uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king's sons: 33 And Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion: 34 And after Ahithophel was Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar: and the general of the king's army was Joab.**

**REFLECTION**

David doesn't number the trainees under 20 years of age, as he has the Lord's promise that there will be increase and he didn't need their numbers. Why does he number the units of the army then? Answer = for logistical planning, as he would need to provide food for units when called up, and he needed to know numbers, location and specific requirements according to the seasonal availability of supplies.

To provide for the army and the court he is going to need, dry food, livestock and metal, leather and wooden goods. Over each procurement channel he needs a person he can trust. Notice that the stores were in cities, towers and villages. This gives an idea of the intelligent logistical planning of David. He understood the importance of having his supplies dispersed, so no sudden attack on one point could rob him of resources. “Do not have all your eggs in one basket”, is the way we put it, but planners can forget this at times with financial constraints, and disaster can result. The British Falkland's Invasion Force had too much tied up on one ship – the Atlantic Conveyor – and when it was sunk they nearly lost the war! A foolish bean counter, a penny pinching PM, with a non-thinking admiral, nearly lost the war for the troops! Learn from David.

Olives, cedar wood, sycamore trees, flocks, herds, camels and vineyards all needed experts in each of the fields, and they had to be individuals who mastered the details and got it right. David uses men from various areas and tribes, including Ishmaelites. David was great because he could work with all, with Philistines and Cretans in his guard, and with various neighbouring groups he had conquered serving him in the logistical areas.

**APPLICATION****[a] Personal**

David treated all people fairly and with dignity. He was not cruel, and so his previous enemies would work with him. He valued expertise and honesty. People could disagree with him and he would hear them, and this is a major strength.

His advisors were friends, and even though they betrayed him they were used for their expertise well by David, even to outfox each other, as Hushai does to Ahithophel in the Great Rebellion.

**[b] Pastoral**

Think logistics Pastor – what does the church need to function? What has been overlooked that might waste the Lord's resources if not attended to? Do not be guided by penny pinching bean counters!!!

Have you walked around the church building recently? Do you know if the drains are flushed and ready to handle a downpour? Are you sure that there are no drain blockages, or power outages that could come back to bite you in the middle of a service?

Do you have the best people around you? Do you have God's right people around you? Each church needs a different mix of people to run efficiently, and they must be Holy Spirit filled and anointed in their tasks.

Are you using the best people, or the ones who you can control? Are you seeking God's person, or have your advisors provided an HR profile to follow? I have just faced a church that decided that no-one over 50 would preach or be on the leadership team!!! They would not have had the Apostle John lead them at 70! We must be careful we do not follow HR rather than God's directions in His Holy Word.

## **CHAPTER 28**

**28:1 And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem. 2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: 3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. 4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel: 5 And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. 7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. 8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. 9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. 10 Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.**

### **REFLECTION**

David does a speech here that no modern "spin doctor" would order given, as he confronts his failures, and his acknowledged unsuitability by God to build a temple. David is humble and ready to be open and transparent, at a time when kings hid their defeats and failings. He shares his heart's desire with all his leaders, and he is careful to be clear, so that they know his heart. David wanted followers who loved his heart's desires, so that they were on the same page at all times.

Verse 4 is a strong statement that reminds them all that he was the youngest son, and that he was chosen by God, not by men to be king, and to be king forever. In other men this would be arrogance that borders on the psychopathic, but here it is an accurate prophetic reflection of the truth.

Verse 5, he must also be open and clear that God has done the same in this next generation, the oldest son will not rule after him, but one of the youngest! This will be a shock to many, as Bathsheba will still be considered by many to be a seducer, and complicit in David's "great Sin", and yet it is her son that is to be king. Is this power politics flowing from the old king's bed-room or is it God's will. In Roman Politics, Nero's mother Agrippina manoeuvred, plotted and then murdered Claudius to ensure her son was Caesar, and would have kept playing politics, except her son Nero then killed her!!! Is Bathsheba a power player? The books of Kings tell us that she is quite naïve, and clearly not a player. Evidence indicates she becomes a great believer and is mother of both ancestors of the line leading to our Lord; so put aside the early impression flowing from her bathing to be seen from the palace. She grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord!

God's choices are often not the ones powerful people would make. God chooses the "best" people to do what HE requires, the obedient, not necessarily the popular choice, and we must be tuned into the will of the Lord and so ensure we embrace God's will, not popular votes. Verse 6 has a strange ring to us, but was the norm in the ancient world at this time and later in Rome also. In Rome the ceremony involved here was called "Toga Virilus". A Father would, at a certain age, around 14 (Bar Mitzveh) select, and formally and publicly choose his son as his heir. He would pick the one most likely to be able to do what was required of him. DNA was irrelevant unless it was expressed in intelligent, moral, and energetic character.

David is acknowledging that Solomon is the one to succeed, and the others will react in different ways to this news. Only the leaders of the nation hear the announcement, and Adonijah will use that fact to later stage a failed coup. He is dumb, but like most "thick" people he over-estimates his intelligence and ability!

David makes it clear that he believes that Solomon will be blessed by God as he obeys the instructions of his father, and he is right, for as Solomon follows David so he is blessed, but prosperity finally unhinges him. In verse 8 David holds the hearers responsible and accountable for the instructions given to Solomon, and the young man cannot say that he was not told the truth bluntly.

He wants his son to know the Lord God as he knows God. David is passionate in his faith, and his Psalms tell us of that journey of faith through the years, where he loves the Lord and expresses his love for the Lord often. David pours out his heart to the Lord in his psalms and is open to the people about his journey, making the Psalms the hymn book for the nation. Solomon will begin his reign in openness, but close down by the midpoint. Transparency is critical in the Lord's work, and when it stops, call the forensic accountant!

David ends this formal dedication speech to his son in the same way naval orders used to be given. When the detail was clear the senior officer would say simply, "Make it so". Solomon is tasked with the completion of the temple project.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

David is clear in his instructions and Solomon formally and publicly takes the order seriously, and he will fulfil it fully – the temple will be built.

Can the leadership trust us with the tasks given to us?

### [b] Pastoral

David was very clear on the task for Solomon to do. Are we clear in our instruction, and are we making others both responsible and accountable before the Lord?

If we pass the baton on to the next generation of leaders, do we do it in a clear manner?

**28:11 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, 12 And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: 13 Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD. 14 He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: 15 Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick. 16 And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shewbread, for every table; and likewise silver for the tables of silver: 17 Also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basons he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver by weight for every bason of silver: 18 And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. 20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not,**

**nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. 21 And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.**

## REFLECTION

David has the architectural drawings for the temple, and exactly like Moses, he has been led to the design by the Holy Spirit. **Exodus 25:40.** It appears that David, like Moses, saw a very specific and detailed vision(s) of the temple and made the drawings to be followed. This is a challenge to us to see that space-time connection through visions to eternity. God has all the details for space-time in eternity and can show them to us when required.

God is detailed in some instructions and we need to get the details right. Ezekiel will be the next man given this detailed visions(s) from which he could do a word description and possibly even a drawing of the millennial temple. **Ezekiel 40ff.** It is a reminder that we will be able to see anything that ever occurred in space and time when we are beyond it in heaven, for from eternity we can see all of space-time.

It is Ezra's great work that has opened my eyes to this as I have commentated on his work, and it has hit me – nothing we feel we have missed out on in this world will be “missed out on”, for if we want to see anything that ever occurred, we will be able to, from the perspective of eternity! Sit with this believer and marvel.

David states quite clearly in verse 19 that everything that he had seen he had “seen” literally and drawn what the Lord showed him so it could be made. He had laid up the silver, the gold and the bronze for the making of everything that would be needed. It appears that even the shape and size of the implements to be used in the temple were shown to David and he noted it all down, and it is clear from here and other passages in Kings, that there were some differences between the implements of the tabernacle and those for the temple.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

David's words of encouragement to Solomon are good ones for us all. He weaves many of the elements of this encouragement into the Psalms, and expands on them there.

*“Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.”*

### [b] Pastoral

David had ensured that everyone was “on board” for the temple project, ready, willing and able to do what was required. Today we call it “buy in” from all the priests and Levites. Let's be inspirational – and we can only be spiritually inspirational if we are Spirit filled and led.

## Notes

**CHAPTER 29**

**1** Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God. **2** Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. **3** Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, **4** Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal: **5** The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD? **6** Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, **7** And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. **8** And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. **9** Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

**REFLECTION**

David speaks to the entire "congregation" in front of him, but in this context, it is the leadership group of the nation. He is appealing for mentors to rise up and support his son in the task to be done. Solomon will be around twenty when he takes over, and he will prove himself ready. The leaders of David's court certainly assisted the young Solomon early on and he received all their advice and acted prayerfully on the godly advice received. David reminds us that the temple was actually to be like a "palace", the dwelling-meeting place of the King of kings amongst men. Palaces were set up as "meeting places" for the King and the People and Visitors, and the accommodation was secondary in this age. The meeting place was to be as great and marvellous as it could be.

David then makes clear just how many "marvellous" things he has laid aside for the temple, right down to the cut marble slabs for the floors. Verse 3 makes it clear that David has put his own wealth and his family's wealth into the pot for this project. He has held nothing back to make this work, freely providing from royal treasuries, and Solomon will add to this, but then go further, and sadly by his own palace and fortress building will dissipate the nation's wealth.

David identifies the tens of millions of dollars worth of gold and silver he has put aside for the project, and then he does an important thing; having proved his commitment he asks for others within the rich and powerful group before him, to openly commit to it also. Verse 5 is an open invitation to have all the people who hear (the wealthy and powerful in front of him) to open their resources and also be part of this building project for God's glory.

This is just as Moses did with the tabernacle, to the extent that the tabernacle was created with funds to spare and Moses had to ask the people to stop giving. **Exodus 35:20-35, 36:1-7**. This is the right approach to "church fund raising". Exactly as occurred in the days in the wilderness the leaders of the people gave freely and with joy to David's project. Verse Six makes clear that they offered "willingly", and we will see they gave more than David had.

Note the figures recorded by Ezra for us here. David gave 3000 talents of gold, the leadership group gave 5000 talents of gold, plus 10,000 drams. David gave 7000 talents of silver, and the leadership group gave 10,000. We have the fact earlier noted that David gave vast quantities of bronze and iron, but we have the leadership groups contribution as 18,000 talents of bronze, and 100,000 talents of iron. This is enough to do the job already, before Solomon starts.

Just as in the Exodus, the leaders also gave freely of their precious stones into the treasury for the project. Contrast this with the offerings from the Exiles (after 70 years of captivity) to get the rebuilding going, in **Ezra 2:64-70**. Ezra himself, 80 years after the temple rebuilding, is then given permission to raise another offering from those staying behind in Babylon, and does so. This is recorded in **Ezra 7:11-26**.

He is carefully recording the details of the earlier giving as a challenge for his people to see from what a high point they have fallen due to their ancestor's unbelief and idolatry. They have a challenge from both the Exodus Generation and that of David, to rebuild spiritually, so that they also will one day have the resources their ancestors had for God's glory.

Verse 9 then records the value of the mentorship in giving by the leadership group. The people, who do not have the resources of their leaders, given the tribal-feudal nature of wealth in their society which always concentrated it at the top, but even though they do not have the resources, they all also give their free will offerings, as they are able. It is a reflection of the Doctrine of Giving, as explained by Paul to the Corinthians. **2 Corinthians 8-9.**

They gave their gifts for the building project, but as it was for God's glory, and Ezra expresses this rightly; they gave "willingly to the Lord". All gifts for the Lord's work are "to the Lord", and are recorded by God as such, as it is our heart desire that is to be expressed in true giving. **Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4.**

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Let us give willingly to the Lord. If there is a project to be done, then God will move upon His people to do the work.

The challenge is for the Pastor first to give, as the Holy Spirit directs, then the leadership team, and only then the church membership is to be asked to pray and give "as the Lord has prospered them". **1 Corinthians 16:2.**

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, it is easy to use manipulative techniques to extort money from the Lord's people for all manner of projects. There are manuals written on fund raising by people who specialize in it, but here we are challenged to get it biblically right in church contexts.

Let us firstly make sure the project is for God's glory, not men's! Let us make sure the Lord is in the project and the Holy Spirit driving it, for then all fund raising is effortless. If we are working really hard to raise funds, the Holy Spirit is not moving! STOP the work and call for prayer, for the people are not believing it to be God's work and until they do, the leadership needs to mentor prayerfulness and focused concentration of finding the will of the Lord.

It is too easy to follow trends, and fund raising is a mine field that will rob the genuine work of God and build monuments to men's glory. Let us only do the things that are to God's glory, and do them in God's way – Holy Spirit moving upon the people, and they freely give, and we have to tell them to stop!

That has been the experience with each EBCWA mission into Africa, and we can relax in each one for that reason, it is the Holy Spirit who is driving us forward. When that stops the work there is over, and we will not ever have any "fund raising drives", for they are work of men, and we are only interested in the work of God.

**29:10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. 11 Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. 15 For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. 16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. 17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. 18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our**



**fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: 19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.**

## REFLECTION

Note David's great prayer of blessing to the Lord here; it is a Psalm of joy and praise to God, where David recognizes that all their grace gifts offered have come from the Lord, who has blessed through all the years before; years of civil war and great upset and death, and yet they are prospered by the Lord to be able to give. David gives thanks; do we enough?

This is a unique Psalm of praise here, and there are echoes of it in **Matthew 6:1-14**, where the Lord, in the "Sermon on the Mount", speaks of genuine prayer, and the heart that is to be behind it. In our records of the Sermon on the Mount we only have a selected summary of all the things Jesus said. Remember **John 20:30-31, 21:25**. I wonder whether the Lord actually recited this prayer of David's here? It is worthy of recitation, and would form a good benediction for our church services, or a prayer before we take up a specific offering.

**Verse 10.** "David blessed the Lord". This is always the way to start any service of dedication. We do well to remember this, and in our songs, prayers and words, bless the Lord. Let us always remember who God is as our Creator, Saviour, Lord and King over all forever.

It is when we forget the majesty and greatness of God that doubt and fear and anxiety enter our lives. This is why the words "Fear Not!" are nearly always surrounded by words that reminds us of the greatness of God's power, and the certainty of God's plan working out. **Psalm 56:4, Daniel 6:26, 10:12, Hebrews 12:1-2, 13:6, 15, 1 John 4:16-19.**

**Verses 11-12.** God is our source of life and all that comes to us on our brief journey through space-time. All that we have comes to us for use on the journey, not saving for a rainy day. All that God gives is to us as his children, for use in his work. We are to pour our lives out in glory to Him. The joy of the Lord is to be our strength and our hope and our confidence. **Nehemiah 8:10.** All we have can be poured out for the Lord, and he will pour back into our souls and our wallets. There is no shadow of turning with Him, nor any short fall of resources; it is His work after all and He will provide for His work! It's only our works that may go short!

**Verse 13.** Giving thanks is to be our daily, hourly habit. **Philippians 3:1, 4:4, 10-13.** A real habit of praise is to characterize our daily lives. All we give back to the Lord, we are giving back, for He has given us all we have, right down to life and strength. We are always a millisecond and a millimetre from eternity, and we can leave this planet and universe at any time the Lord's plan calls for our journey's end. Let our days be characterized by praise, and all worry poured out to the one who gave Himself for us. **1 Peter 1:18-25, 5:5-10.**

The answer to the question that David asks in verse 14, "Who am I?", is answered by Peter's affirmation in his first letter, "I am a child of God purchased by the precious blood of Jesus". We are just strangers and sojourners here on this small planet, but through our relationship with Christ, we are children of God forever and destined to enjoy Him forever! **John 3:16, 36.**

Let's get that temporary nature of our time here, for too many Christians are settled and so focused on the wealth and life that passes that they have forgotten heaven! **Psalm 39:12-13, Hebrews 11:8-16.** It is the Lord who has lifted us up in Christ Jesus, and by grace through faith lifted us into an eternal relationship with Him. Let us praise His holy name every day, and remember our finitude here, but have our eyes firmly fixed on our eternal destiny.

This Commentary is being written at exactly the same time as we finish the "Perfect Tense" studies, and they are reminding us in power of the eternal life perspective that we need to have daily. The best is yet to come – we have a heavenly calling – remember who you are now believer, but remember who you are forever in Him. **1 Peter 2:9-12.**

Our lives are like a shadow, and none of us "abide here" on the earth forever, and we are not made for that; we are made for eternity. Space and time are simply a bubble in eternity-infinity, and with resurrection bodies we are destined for that. **Psalm 102:11-13, 109:21-26.**

**Verses 16-17.** David repeats the principle that is so crucial; all we have is from the Lord and when we give it back to Him, we give it freely, with open hearts and open wallets in joy. David rejoices in joy at the joy in the giving of the others. Their joining together in this project has overwhelmed him in worshipful praise; he sees the Spirit of God moving in the people and that gives him hope for the future.

**Verses 18-19.** David does a very important thing here, and the writer to the Hebrews does the same in Hebrews 11, as does Ezra in this work of Chronicles. He connects the promises of the past to the work in the present and the work in the future. He looks back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he looks ahead to the work that Solomon will do. He connects them all in the great unfolding drama of redemption in which they are all playing their part in the eternal plan of God that blesses them all, and they are all walking through space-time in the power of the Holy Spirit that unites and carries them all onwards to eternity!

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

All we have is from the Lord, and we are right to look for opportunities to give all we have back to the Lord, for His glory.

We are on this planet on a journey through space-time towards eternity. Let us pour blessing and prayer out daily in praise and thanksgiving for all we have received.

### [b] Pastoral

Pastors, I believe we can use this “forgotten Psalm” of David way more than we do. So many don't even know it's here. Let us praise the Lord, and pray that those who follow us in the ministry may have a “perfect heart” – solely dedicated to the praise and glory of God.

**29:20 And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king. 21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: 22 And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest. 23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. 24 And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. 25 And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel. 26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 27 And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. 28 And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead. 29 Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, 30 With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.**

## REFLECTION

Read the parallel passages at this point and pick up the doctrines covered there again. Read through **1 Kings 1:1 – 3:1**. Ezra is summarizing many things and leaving out the intrigue, for he is focused upon the godly aspects of the transition, as he wants there to be worship and focus for his people and all generations thereafter. We are to be imitators of the best of our spiritual ancestors, not their “bad days”.... **Philippians 3:13-21**. It is encouraging, for we all have bad days, but by confession they are put behind us. Forward!

All the people join David in godly worship and bowed their heads before the Lord. The posture of prayer is much debated by theologians. The present Moslem posture of prostration is the most common one from the ancient world, but the other, also used by Moslem and Jew still, was to stand upright, head bowed with hands outstretched palms upwards at waist height, and meditate upon the facts that David has been recounting all this chapter. All we receive is in grace from God.

The offerings offered that day were extensive, due to the numbers attending, for while part of the offerings was burned before the Lord on the altar, most of the meat was cooked and shared as a spiritual fellowship meal together. Verse 21-22. This is the second dedication of Solomon, and this solemn reaffirmation of his kingship was the opportunity for more worship. Do not ever be afraid of celebrating too much the glory of the Lord.

Verse 25 reminds us that the days of Solomon were the greatest for Israel to this point I am writing in their history. Their greatest day is still to come under the personal rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Solomon's early reign we see the glory that can be if all people devote themselves to God's glory alone.

The great sadness of Solomon's reign is that with great blessing goes great temptations, for prosperity is harder to handle than poverty, for in poverty you pray, because you are desperate, but in great wealth you can be tempted to relax into your pleasures, and there are no limits to them. Solomon will fall, but let's enjoy his great years, before we get too sad about his later fall. He is a warning, but early on an encouragement!

David's reign is over with his death, and we are reminded that we all end our journey here and return to the One who made us, and assigned us our particular brief journey through space-time. **2 Corinthians 5:1-20**. Read this whole chapter in the Commentary and be encouraged in light of the death of David as Ezra tells it.

The great thing about Ezra's comment on the records of David's life that he had before him is that we have a door opened to the things that had survived the Babylonian Exile. We have the book of Samuel the Seer, 1 Samuel, and there is debate as to whether, what we call **2 Samuel** is the work of Nathan or Gad, or both? Wait until heaven to answer this one believer, as the Commentators do not know... It is most likely Jeremiah and/or Ezekiel who do the work to produce what we call **1 and 2 Kings**.

## APPLICATION

### [a] Personal

Don't get hung up on their "worship" of David; the people are not confused about who they should worship, but all in that day showed respect, awe and bowed to the King/Emperor.

They are right to do so in David's case, as in him were the genes that would lead to the humanity of Messiah, and so in honouring David they honoured the one to come in his line. They honoured the promise made to David by the Lord in their worship, and we need to be worshipping the Lord alone today, honouring his promises that we inherit in the one who came from David – the Lord Jesus Christ.

### [b] Pastoral

Let us remember the past, to draw strength for the present, and reinforce our hope for the future. This is the nature of genuine faith and that is what we are called to – real faith in the real God revealed here in the Scriptures.

Close your study of this first book of Ezra by reading slowly in the Hebrews Commentary. Read **Hebrews 11:1-3** first, then go back to Hebrews **Chapter 3:7 and read through to Chapter 4:12**.

Worship, praise and give thanks to our God, for He has lifted us up and given us all we have. Let us advance into the rest of our life journey this day with praise.

Written after the darkest day in our national history here in New Zealand, but with Ezra's words burning in my mind and heart, I am looking to what God is going to do with the tragedy that has unfolded over this last night here. We are always to see things in terms of God's work, and what HE wants us to do to face the tragedies; only question is always – what is the Lord doing here, and what are we to do?

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