



*Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. (v.1-2)*

At a first glance Chronicles seems like a repeat of Kings. There is a degree of overlap but it is different. Both start with David and move towards the division that took place after Solomon. 1, 2 Kings deals primarily with the Kings of Israel. In it we read some about the Kings of Judah but there isn't as much detail. 1, 2 Chronicles does the opposite – they deal primarily with Judah and the Kings of Judah. This is good for us because there were many more Kings in Judah who followed the Lord so we are not going to be so depressed by the evil. There is a lot more hope for us in 1, 2 Chronicles.

The first nine chapters make hard reading – it is genealogy time. And the list of names is dry with very little comment beside them. And we are tempted to skip over them and get straight to the action in chapter 10. But this is God's Word and all of it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. And here in the first four verses we see the gospel message. Sometimes we need to dig deeper in order to see the truths God has placed in His Word for us. Consider the meanings of these names:

Adam = man	Seth = appointed
Enosh = subject to death	Kenan = sorrowful
Mahalalel = from the presence of God	Jared = one comes down
Enoch = dedicated	Methuselah = dying he shall send
Lamech = to the poor brought very low	Noah = comfort or rest

So we have Man - Appointed, Subject to death, Sorrowful. From the presence of God One comes down, Dedicated. Dying He shall send to the poor brought very low Comfort, or rest. This is the gospel message way back in Genesis. Let's give thanks to God for his great plan of salvation which was there from the beginning of time.

**Pray:** thanking God for our salvation.

**Reflect:** on God's great love for us that while we were yet sinners he sent his son to die for us.

*The son of Carmi: Achar who brought trouble on Israel by violating the ban on taking devoted things. (v.7)*

The famous writer, Ernest Hemingway, came from a solid Christian family. His parents and both sets of grandparents were evangelical Christians. As a boy he sang in the choir, tithed his allowance, and read through his King James Bible. Yet he rebelled against his upbringing and became notorious for his profligate, godless life. Lonely, bitter, and depressed, he shot himself at age 61. His descendants are thoroughly pagan.

But, thankfully, it can go the other way. Hudson Taylor, founder of the great China Inland Mission, traced his spiritual roots through his mother back to his great-grandfather who was converted from a worldly way of life. Today, Taylor's great-grandson is a prominent missions leader. Millions of souls have been won to Christ because Taylor's great-grandfather established a Christian home.

Two different lives lived and two different legacies remain. What kind of legacy do you want? In this second chapter of names we come across Achan (Achar as he is called here) once more. And in this list of people where only their names and those of their offspring are listed, there is a sentence on the life of Achan. And it's not a good phrase either. With all he may have done with his life all that we remember him by is this epitaph '*Achar who brought trouble on Israel by violating the ban on taking devoted things.*'

I'm sure we don't want to be remembered by the one black spot on our life. Let's live our lives for God, living His Way and seeking to follow Him in all we do. In that way perhaps the final words for us will be 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

**Pray:** confessing any sin to God and asking Him for strength to avoid temptation.

**Reflect:** what might people remember you for? What would you want them to remember you for?

*Those were the sons of David.... (v.1)*

King David now takes centre stage and we are reminded of the royal line leading onward from David toward Jesus. David's sons are all listed – and it is quite some list. For all that David was a man after God's own heart he had a weakness for the ladies. And we all remember the shameful incident with Bathsheba. David had four sons with Bathsheba – remember of course in biblical genealogies it is usually only the males that are mentioned. Two of the sons are of interest to us though – Nathan and Solomon.

Solomon of course had that great moment when he asked God for wisdom rather than riches and fame. He had many other great moments but he also had some times of great backsliding. A reminder to us that no matter how well we think we are walking with the Saviour, we are weak human beings and like sheep are prone to wander – we give in easily to temptation at times. It is important for us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith at all times. In Matthew's gospel we find the royal line moving on from Solomon to Rehoboam on down to Joseph the father of Jesus and then Jesus himself.

Nathan as you will remember is the name of a great friend of David's in the past. We remember that it was a man named Nathan who came to David to address the issue of David's adultery and murder. Such was the friendship they had that David names one of his own sons after him. He remembered Nathan's friendship. I wonder if our friends remember our friendship even though we may be separated through the years by distance.

And the other interesting fact is that Mary, Jesus' mother, is descended from Nathan's line. Read Luke's genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 and although Mary is not mentioned this is her side of the family tree – and again it goes right back to David.

**Pray:** for families in the church.

**Reflect:** on your friends whom you haven't seen for a while but who have had an impact on your life. Give thanks to God for them.

*Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. (v.9)*

Chinese New Year celebrations are fun for children. When relatives and friends get together, it's the custom for adults to give children small, red envelopes containing token sums of money. Children often rip open their packets just to get the money, and their parents have to remind them that the giver is more important than the gift.

Similarly, when we study the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, it is important to remember that the Giver, the Lord, is more important than the gift. If we focus solely on the request of Jabez, it could be easy to make the mistake of turning it into a formula for obtaining what we want from God.

The genealogy continues with the other clans of Judah. As we go through the names this time we come to these 2 verses on a man called Jabez. We don't know much about Jabez, except that his mother gave him a name that sounds like the Hebrew word for "distress" or "pain." We're also told that when he grew up, '*Jabez was more honourable than his brothers.*'

What made Jabez '*more honourable*'? On the basis of his prayer, we can assume that he took his relationship with God seriously. There was no magic in the words of his prayer. Rather, he knew that God is the giver of all things. Jabez was honourable, I believe, because he honoured the Lord. He just looked at how those around him were living and decided that he could do better! Jabez was not remembered as a great leader, prophet or preacher. He did not make his mark on the battlefields of life as a great leader of men. His name is remembered because He was a man of prayer. His name is remembered because he was a man of God in a godless day!

Let us not make the mistake of seeking after a formula for prayer that will see us get all that we want...rather let us seek to be men and women like Jabez who honour God in all we do.

**Pray:** asking God to help us know him better, love him better and serve him better.

**Reflect:** do I seek to honour God in every area of my life?

*He answered their prayers, because they trusted in him. (v.20)*

We are reminded now of Reuben and his family line. We see here the two mistakes made, first by Reuben and then by his family years later. Thankfully we also see a time when they trusted God completely. We are told that Reuben, who was the firstborn, lost that right of the double portion of the inheritance, because he slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Genesis 35:22 & Genesis 49). Reuben was sinful – he had defiled his father's bed. Thus, the right of the firstborn was given to the son's of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim.

The second mistake was the clan of Reuben in choosing to stay on the Eastern side of the River Jordan. Back in Numbers 32 as the people were looking ahead to the Promised Land, the Reubenites and Gadites saw the land where they were as fruitful and good. They asked to stay there. They had come so far with God but now saw good things with their eyes and wanted to stay. They stopped short of receiving the full blessing of God. How sad in life that we often choose to do the same. We walk so far with God and then the carnal pleasures of life. On account of this they would be the first to be picked off and taken into captivity. If we don't keep walking by the Spirit, we too will be the first taken into captivity – sin will bind us as we seek the carnal pleasures of life rather than the full blessing of God.

We do learn though in the midst of all this that they trusted God completely. In verses 18-22 we see these two and a half tribes go against the enemy and they are victorious, not because of their own strength. It says '*they cried out to him [God] during the battle.*' You see, they put their trust in the Lord after they cried out to him, and they were victorious against the enemy. God gave them the victory. We must remember that lesson, that our victory will not be won in the flesh, but as we surrender ourselves to God's Spirit and allow Him to conform us into the image of God. Cry out to Him and then trust in Him!

**Pray:** asking God for help in that area of your life you are struggling with just now

**Reflect:** do I trust God completely to hear and answer my prayer?

*Their fellow Levites were assigned to all the other duties of the Tabernacle, the house of God. (v.48)*

This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

We all know about jobs needing done, don't we. The next people mentioned in the lists of names in Chronicles are the sons of Levi. The sons of Levi were given specific duties in the care of the tabernacle (Numbers 3). The Gershonites were responsible for the fabrics of the tabernacle, the coverings, tents, clothes, curtain's, cords and so on. The Kohathites were responsible for the ark, table of showbread, the oil burning lamp, the altars of burnt offering and incense, the sacred vessels, the veil and so on. This was the priestly line which Aaron came from. The Merarites were responsible for the frames, crossbars, bases, posts and so on. They and all their fellow Levites carried out all the duties they were assigned.

God has given each us each specific duties or responsibilities within the body of Christ in general and the church. The problem arises when we don't fulfil those responsibilities or we want to be something that God has not called us to be. First of all, if we don't exercise our gift, then the body suffers. Secondly, it is always a disaster when someone tries to be something they are not. What a mistake and what a problem. Let's recognise our gift(s) and our calling, and get on serving God in the area He has called us to serve.

**Pray:** asking God to show you the gift(s) you have.

**Reflect:** am I fulfilling my responsibilities in church life?

*All these were descendants of Asher – heads of families, choice men, brave warriors and outstanding leaders. (v.40)*

In this chapter we find details of six of the twelve tribes of Israel. We find Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim and Asher. They do not get such in-depth treatment as Judah and Levi and that is because their family lines are not connected with kings or priests. That does not mean that no names of importance come out because they do. Nor does it mean these were not good people because we see in verse 40 ‘*All these were descendants of Asher – heads of families, choice men, brave warriors and outstanding leaders.*’ No one person is mentioned particularly here but in general the family line of Asher were good people. They were brave and had leadership skills that shone through. The secret here I believe is that they faithfully served and were remembered for their service. May we serve faithfully and quietly looking forward to our reward in heaven.

Perhaps the most important name listed is found in verse 27 and if you only picked up your bible here and read this verse you might well think nothing of it ‘*Nun his son, and Joshua his son.*’ Joshua, son of Nun. Now we know from our readings already that Joshua has been a key player in the life of the children of Israel. Joshua has faithfully served and followed wherever God leads. And God has used him to take His people into the Promised Land to settle there.

Joshua had been a faithful servant to Moses. He and Caleb had been the only two to see the potential of the land and to trust that God would overcome their enemies and give them this land of promise. Joshua was a great commander who had led the people against the Amalekites as Moses held up the staff of the Lord. And after Moses’ death Joshua was commanded to be bold and strong and lead the people into the land. No name is ever simply a name. There is always a story behind a person.

May people see the story of a life lived for God when they hear our name.

**Pray:** asking God to help us follow him wherever he may lead.

**Reflect:** am I serving faithfully?



*Saul the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab and Esh-Baal. The son of Jonathan: Merib-Baal. (v.33-34)*

The Benjamites have already been briefly mentioned in chapter 7. The genealogy of Benjamin is given more attention here. And this is in large part to the fact that Saul is mentioned here. The purpose of this list is to lead up to the first king of Israel, Saul. Special focus needs to go to the name of one of Saul's sons and then the name of Jonathan's son. Names as we have thought before are important. And often in the bible names meant something to people – their names often described their character.

Baal was the idol-god of Zidon and of many surrounding nations. This idol, representing the sun in his productive force, was worshipped with impure and scandalous rites. The introduction of this name into the name of one of Saul's sons indicates the secret root of the downfall and consequent misfortunes of that ill-fated monarch. In the earlier part of his reign he was perfect in his allegiance to Jehovah - Jonathan means "Gift of Jehovah" - but as the years went on, he became proud and self-sufficient; he turned to Baal, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit rushed in to take His place, as wind rushes in to fill a vacuum.

The name which Jonathan gave his son had another significance. Merib-baal is one who opposes Baal. It is as though he would indelibly, stamp upon his child an undying hatred and opposition to that idolatry which was undoing his father's character and kingdom. In this choice of his child's name we also gather the deep-seated piety and devotion of that noble soul, whose heart was true to God amid the darkening shadows of his father's reign. It was this that probably drew David and him so closely in affinity.

The ruin of Saul's home, family, and realm, began in his personal disloyalty to God. How important it is for us to remain true and loyal to God that we might influence our families well.

**Pray:** for our families – that we would all remain true to God.

**Reflect:** is my heart set on God alone?

*Some of their Kohathite brothers were in charge of preparing for every Sabbath the bread set out on the table. (v.32)*

The genealogy has been given and here in chapter 9 we find the list of those who were first to return after the exile. The return to Israel from their captivity began in 536 BC and not many wanted to return home, for they became very comfortable in Babylon. The first to return were the religious leadership. Those who would be involved in service came back first. We see the priests listed and then the Levites and then gatekeepers. Each had important jobs and a role to play. In essence those who would minister to the people came back first and were in place for the rest of the nation returning.

The gatekeeper was an important role. A certain group of the Levites had ONE job...that was to open the doors. They kept out those that were unclean and they opened the door for those who had need. These men were in charge of opening and closing the gates of the temple and they were to make sure that only those who belonged in the temple area were allowed in, and keeping out those that did not belong there. In a sense they were guarding the flock from harm – just like a shepherd. Jesus speaks in John 10 about being the gate through which people will come to be saved. He warns of the thief coming to steal, kill and destroy. In a real sense the gatekeeper is protecting the saints. And the pastor today has a key role in looking after the saints entrusted to his care – to feed them and to warn them of the dangers of Satan around.

Other jobs and responsibilities within the temple are given – to look after the furnishings, the items for the altar, the musical elements and even the bread. No job is too big or small. No job is too menial. Everything needs done and the people work together to get them done. We all have roles to play in church life too. None is too menial. All are important. Let's make sure we are playing our part in the family.

**Pray:** for your pastor that he would fulfil his role well under God's guidance.

**Reflect:** am I playing my part in church life?

*Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. (v.13)*

We learn again of Saul's death in this chapter. We have read this before at the end of 1 Samuel. Saul was a man of great potential and yet he fell far short of what God wanted him to be. In these verses we see three reasons why he failed. Saul was unfaithful to God. God instructed Saul to wipe out the Amalekites and he only does half the job. He was more interested in himself than obeying what God had told him to do.

Saul did not keep the word of God. God had said in His word that the priests alone were to offer the sacrifices unto Him. But Saul found himself in trouble with the Philistines, they were preparing for war, and fear was growing in Israel. People were hiding in rocks and caves and fleeing for their lives. And Saul was impatient waiting for the prophet Samuel to come and on the seventh day he could not wait any longer and Saul offered his own sacrifice to the Lord.

And Saul did not inquire of God. After the death of Samuel, Saul had no one to inquire of the Lord for him, and God was not speaking to him. And again the Philistines gathered for war and Saul was scared, so he goes to the witch of Endor to seek council in what he should do. And it says of this encounter in I Samuel 28:18-19, 'Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out His fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today.'

Saul did not keep his focus on God and did not live God's way. He did not keep God's Word or inquire of him. What of us? Are we a people who read God's Word, pray to him for guidance and then follow his leading and guiding? Are we living God's way? Are we walking by the Spirit?

**Pray:** for strength and courage to keep following God faithfully in this world.

**Reflect:** am I reading my bible and praying every day and am I walking faithfully in God's way?

*And the LORD your God said to you “You will shepherd my people Israel and you will become their ruler.” (v.2)*

God keeps His promises. There were several years (at least 20 years) between when Samuel anointed David king, and when the people finally anointed him. We are told that David was a young man when Samuel anointed him (1Samuel16:11), and it wasn't until he was thirty-seven when he became king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:4, 5).

During those years, life was not exactly easy for David. Much of the time he was running for his life from crazy Saul who was so jealous of David that he was constantly trying to kill him. During those times he was living in caves, hiding out with the Philistines, on the run. But God's promise was that he would be king. Even when the opportunity came, David didn't take things into his own hands. Twice he had the opportunity of personally killing Saul, making it possible to fulfil God's promise all by himself. Yet he didn't. He let God do the exalting.

Remember that David, for seven and a half years is king in Hebron, while for two years the rest of the nation followed after King Saul's son, Ishbosheth. But now we see that the entire nation wants David to be their king. It is interesting to note that even when Saul was king, the people recognised David as their leader. He was the one leading them in battle. They saw the hand of God on David's life even before he was king.

David has had to wait many years to become king. And yet over all those years, even as a shepherd, God was training David to be king. Don't ever think that where God has placed you now is a waste of time. God is preparing you, moulding and shaping you for the work he has called you to do, whatever that may be. If God has called you, He will equip you for the work. It is as Paul said in Philippians 1:6, *'being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'*

**Pray:** thanking God for His faithfulness and for keeping His promises.

**Reflect:** in what ways is God preparing me for present and future service.

*These are the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the Lord had said. (v.23)*

Chapter 12 gives us a list of the men who came over to David's side. These fighting men joined David as he was established as king. Many of these men are described as skilled, trained and brave warriors. They all come with great rejoicing to join sides with David as God makes him king over Israel.

For seven and a half years David reigned in Hebron, but now the nation is coming to him, requesting that he would be their king and lead them. Saul has died and the nation needed someone to help bring them together, and David was that man. At a young age David was anointed king by the prophet Samuel, and now around twenty years later that promise became a reality. David went through years of training, years of preparation, and now God is causing men to be drawn to him as their leader. David did not have to fight for the throne, God gave it to him. And as they made David king, there was great joy in Israel!

That is an important lesson for all of us to learn. If God has called you into a ministry, you don't have to go kicking down the door to obtain it. In God's timing He will open that door and all you will have to do is step in. Notice what Jesus says in Revelation 3:8. He says *'I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.'*

Doors of ministry are not opened by us, for we only have a little strength. They are opened and they are closed by the Lord. No one can stop what He is going to do, except us, if we do not step through that open door - that door of opportunity! Keep your eyes on the Lord and when he opens a door walk right on through behind him.

**Pray:** thanking God for his leading and guiding.

**Reflect:** what doors lie open before me just now? What opportunities are there to serve the Lord?

*The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. (v.10)*

In Myanmar (Burma), children are taught to give objects to their parents and elders with both hands. In Asia it isn't polite to use only one hand to give a business card to someone. And it's extremely rude to toss it across the table to the recipient. To show respect, people use both hands to give a business card to a person. It is all about respect.

Here in chapter 13 we discover how important respect is to God. David had good intentions when he decided to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. The Bible says that they '*moved the Ark of God...on a new cart...*' David had a problem and it was the fact that he either forgot or ignored the clear command of God as to how the Ark was to be transported. The Ark was to be lifted by means of two golden poles which were to be passed through golden rings fashioned on the corners of the Ark, Exodus 25:14-15. The Ark was then to be lifted up and carried upon the shoulders of a family of Levites known as the Kohathites, Numbers 7:9.

Unfortunately the ark went to fall from the cart and Uzzah, no doubt thinking he was doing the right thing, reached out to steady it with his hand. No one was supposed to touch the ark hence the poles. And so God struck Uzzah down. David came to realise that what he wanted to do for God had to be done with respect for Him and His specific instructions. The ark represented the presence of God, and you did not touch or approach God anyway you wanted. God was not to be man handled. Today many do what David did. They want to approach God according to their terms, their ways, and God will not accept that. You see, it is only through Jesus Christ that we can go to the Father.

What David learned is something we too must take to heart. Showing respect for God means learning what He wants us to do and then obeying Him completely.

**Pray:** asking God's forgiveness for not approaching him properly at times.

**Reflect:** how do I approach God?

*So David inquired of the LORD again and God answered him. (v.14)*

David is building the palace at this stage and he recognises that God has established him as king over Israel. It has nothing to do with David – his knowledge, wisdom, strength, might, prowess, beauty, it is all of God. We should remember that principle in life as well. How easy it is at times for us to accept praise and to think how good we are. God it is who blesses us with gifts, talents and abilities. God it is who uses us for his glory.

David's kingdom has been highly exalted and news spreads and his enemies come out. As God worked mightily in David's life, the devil also got to work and brought opposition against David. The Philistines were not exactly pleased with the defection of David, for he was supposed to be on their side at one time and now he is king over Israel, king over their enemy. So they gather for war against David and Israel, and the first thing that David does is he inquires of the Lord in what he should do. And God gives him the battle plan and the victory. And the gods of the Philistines, the ones they brought into battle with them, were burned by David and his men.

Again the Philistines go against Israel, and I want you to notice that David once again inquires of the Lord in what he should do. I think I might have thought to myself we've just been here and God has shown us what to do already. I think I would do what we did the last time. Not David. He asks God in case plan 'A' has changed to plan 'B'. And God gives to them a different battle plan this time and once again David and the nation of Israel are victorious over the Philistines.

David asked specific questions of the Lord, and if we are unsure what to do, we too need to be specific when we pray and ask for direction from God. And we should never take for granted previous answers we have received. In every situation we should inquire of God what he wants for us to do.

**Pray:** asking God for guidance in a particular situation you face.

**Reflect:** do I always inquire of the Lord or do I go my own way?

*Then David said “No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever.” (v.2)*

John received a parrot for his birthday. This parrot was fully grown with a bad attitude and worse vocabulary. Every other word was an expletive. Those that weren't expletives were, to say the least, rude. John tried hard to change the bird's attitude and was constantly saying polite words, playing soft music, anything he could think of. Nothing. He yelled at the bird and it got worse. He shook the bird; it got madder and ruder. Finally, in a moment of desperation, John put the parrot in the freezer. For a few moments he heard the bird squawking and kicking and screaming expletives, then suddenly there was quiet. Frightened that he might have actually hurt the bird, he quickly opened the freezer door. The parrot calmly stepped out onto John's extended arm and said, "I'm sorry that I might have offended you with my language and actions and ask for your forgiveness. I will endeavor to correct my behavior." Astounded at the bird's change, John was about to ask what had brought this about when the parrot continued, "May I ask what the chicken did?"

We need to learn from our mistakes. But I find that sometimes the hard thing is determining just what the mistake was. We might be tempted to think that Uzzah made a mistake in touching the Ark. The actual mistake was in putting the Ark on an oxcart. The actual mistake took place long before Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark. This time round David has learned from his mistake. He has remembered the instructions of God.

David has now prepared a place for the ark and he is ready to bring it up to Jerusalem. This time there will be no cart and no ordinary people moving the cart with the ark on it. This time David is doing things properly. He is obeying God's commands and following God's instructions. The Levites are given the responsibility of bringing the ark up on the poles. May we learn from our mistakes and follow God more closely.

**Pray:** asking God's forgiveness for the times we have done things our own way – even in these past few days.

**Reflect:** do I learn from my mistakes?



*Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim His salvation day after day. (v.23)*

It was a normal Sunday afternoon several years ago for a certain family. The whole family was gathered around the table for dinner. The 4-year-old son Stevie led off the pre-meal prayer: “Dear heavenly Father, thank You for this nice day. Thank You that we could go to church and Sunday school today.” Then, to everyone’s surprise, he said, “And we’ll see You again next week.”

What Stevie said in his prayer is how we often view the Christian life, I’m afraid. We easily fall into a see-you-next-time attitude about God. We forget about Him as we fulfil our daily responsibilities. We go for days at a time trying to pay the bills, keep the boss happy, and give attention to each family member. But we neglect to give God the time He deserves. It is like we place God in a compartment and label it “Sunday”. Then we place other parts of our life in other compartments. God is more than that though. He deserves all of our life. He deserves to be a part of everything we do. When we crown him Lord of our life we ought to mean it.

David touches on this in his psalm of praise here. He has been established as king over Israel, he is seated in his palace in Jerusalem and the ark has been returned to Jerusalem as well. David wants to praise God and let the people be part of that too. Notice that it is not just thanking God for what He has done but sharing with others the things that God has done in your life. Be a witness of what God is doing in your life to others, share with them what God has done for you.

Remember that God blesses us each and every day. He gives us life and breath every morning. David says in verse 23 that we are to sing to God day after day. It’s not just a Sunday thing. And he lists reasons why we should praise God – God is great and good, he is the creator and sustainer of his people, and he has saved them from their enemies. Let’s not place God in a compartment.

**Pray:** praising God for his many blessings to you today.

**Reflect:** do I only worship God on a Sunday?

*Nathan replied to David, “Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you.” (v.2)*

David is sitting in palace with all its splendour and majesty and he realises the ark of the Lord is in a tent. He sees that this shouldn't be the case and that God deserves the best. I wonder how many of us think the same. How many times do we buy the best for our homes and yet when it comes to the church we skimp and cut corners where we can. God deals with this whole issue later in Haggai (using words very similar to those in verse 6).

As Nathan hears the heart of David, his request to build a house for God, Nathan tells David to go ahead and do all that is in his heart. You see it was the right thing to do. Nathan doesn't even bother to inquire of God for he feels it is the right thing to do. But Nathan is going to find out that just because it is the right thing to do, doesn't mean it is the will of God. The reminder here, once more, is to not rely on our own knowledge, thoughts and feelings, but rather to seek first God and ask Him to lead us and guide us.

God tells Nathan to go to David and tell him he is not getting to build the house. When God says “no” it is not always because what we intend to do is wrong or bad. There was nothing wrong with what David wanted to do. It was not wrong to build the Temple. In fact, David's son would be the one to build it. God would even give David the plans (1 Chronicles 28:19-20) and the materials to build the Temple, just not permission to do the actual building. We later discover this was because David's hands were the hands of a warrior and he had shed blood with them.

God sometimes says no even when we think it is the right thing to do. He does though go on to say that he'll do something better. That something better might not happen straight away but if we wait God will reveal it to us. David is told that God will establish his kingdom through David's line. Jesus was born from David's line!

**Pray:** praising God for his perfect plans.

**Reflect:** do I follow my heart or do I turn things over to God?

*David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people. (v.14)*

We often think that David only had one victory – that over Goliath. It's the big one certainly and the one we all remember for it's the little shepherd boy over the giant. But God gave David many other victories. In this chapter we are reminded of several of them. The Philistines were a thorn in the side of Israel ever since the time of Joshua, when they entered the land of Canaan. Now David takes the wind out of their sail and subdues them. Then it's the Moabites, Syrians and Edomites. It seems like nothing is going to stop David. He is victorious in all that he is doing. The kingdom of David is spreading outward.

David was told by God that he could not build Him a house, but God never said that David could not gather the materials for his son Solomon who will build God a house. After many of these victories David took the spoils and stored them for Solomon to use later in building the temple for the Lord. This tells me that we are to give to the Lord whatever we have, to assist in the building of His kingdom. We are to give him our time, talents and treasure.

We learn that David reigned over the people doing what was just and right. He cared for the people. He knew God had given him responsibility over them but he did not lord that over them. In fact he dealt with all matters in a righteous and proper manner. I wonder how we treat those in our workplace if we are a supervisor or a manager. Do we treat them with respect and do what is right by them? Do we avoid having favourites? Do we look out for them and allow them to grow and develop under our leadership? Do we avoid being harsh with them when things go wrong?

David had many victories and reigned well because he was a man after God's own heart. He sought God and walked in his ways. May we too walk in God's ways.

**Pray:** asking God to help us in the workplace.

**Reflect:** am I a good boss? Do I treat others fairly?

*David thought “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. (v.2)*

David heard that his old friend Nahash had died and his son Hanun had succeeded him to the throne. David thought he would extend kindness to him in the same his father had shown kindness to David. David knew what it was like to be alone at times. He had been separated from his family for periods of time. He had to run from Saul’s attacks and stay away from those he knew and loved. So he sensed that Hanun was feeling the loss of his father and wanted to show love, support and care. David’s intentions were honourable. It is good for us to reach out to those around us who are struggling. We have all suffered in one way or another: illness, bereavement, unemployment. They are in every family. We have come through them with God’s comfort and peace and so it is good for us to reach out to others and share some Christian love. Watch out for opportunities to show kindness.

Unfortunately David’s intentions were misread. Hanun’s nobles planted a seed of doubt in his mind. They asked if David was showing kindness or spying out the land. David’s intentions were misread and Hanun abused David’s men and sent them back humiliated. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, our actions are misunderstood.

Hanun’s nobles were suspicious. They were cautious people who always thought the worst. They didn’t trust anyone. They didn’t see the good in anyone. You know some people have been so hurt in their lives – they can’t or don’t trust anyone. Any act of kindness there is the suspicion of some ulterior motive behind it. I think that’s what these nobles were like.

The lesson here is to watch who we surround ourselves with and who we listen to. It is right to be cautious but it is not right to always look for the bad in people. Surround yourself with godly people whom you trust and listen to their advice. All the time remembering the best advice comes from our heavenly father. – remember to pray.

**Pray:** asking God to give you an opportunity to show kindness this week.

**Reflect:** am I willing to show kindness to others?

*David remained in Jerusalem. (v.1)*

David, at this time, is around 55 years old. And maybe he was tired of fighting. Maybe he just wanted to rest and enjoy the fruits of his labour, resting in his beautiful palace. It was a time for kings to go to war, but we are told that David stayed in Jerusalem. It doesn't matter how old you are or how young you are, the flesh must be dealt with on a daily basis. Idle time is used by the enemy to defeat us, for when we are busy we don't have time to let our mind wander.

And David is going to find out that truth, as he remains at home, while his men are out fighting. Up to this point, as king, David has only seen victory, but after his sin with Bathsheba he will see wars and turmoil within his own family, that the enemies he once was victorious over are now defeating him. He will see his own sons try to usurp the throne from him. He will see all kinds of family problems. The devil could not defeat him from without, but he did defeat him from within.

Now this whole incident with Bathsheba and David's sin with her is not mentioned in the book of Chronicles. And you may be wondering why God would leave it out. I believe that in the books of Samuel & Kings we are looking at things from the vantage point of man, a human perspective. But Chronicles is written from a heavenly perspective. You see, God does not mention the sin of David because God does not hold our sins against us. In Psalm 103:12 we are told '*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*' On a horizontal plane the east and the west don't ever meet, thus God has completely removed our sin, cast it away. That should be a great comfort to us, for we all will blow it, but God has forgiven us and will not hold it against us, for all our sins are covered by the blood of Christ. But also understand that many times we do suffer the consequences of our sin, even though God has forgiven us. David saw the result of his sin and how it affected his own family with incest and murder and so on.

**Pray:** thanking God for forgiveness of your sins.

**Reflect:** am I resting up or involved in full time Christian service?

*I have sinned greatly by doing this. (v.8)*

Late in his life, David succumbed to Satan's prompting to take a census (1 Chronicles 21:1-6). This seemingly innocent act displeased God (v.7-8) because David was taking pride in his military might. There seems to have been a subtle shift from completely relying on God, who had often miraculously delivered him, to trusting in his own power and strength. This census by David seemed to be about gratifying his pride in the great strength of his army and consequent military power. David was taking credit for his victories by the building of his great army.

It doesn't matter how many years we have been a Christian, Satan is still prowling around ready to devour us. He tries to tempt us take pride in our own achievements and to take our eyes off of God. David does this here.

Joab senses something is wrong and tries to warn David. Joab knew David was operating on a sinful motivate, but the king's arrogance led him to ignore the warning. God places people in our lives to help us and to support us. We would do well to listen to the advice of those we trust. And likewise as good friends we should be willing to point out sin in our friend's lives that they might turn back to God as well.

Not only do we see temptation and the blindness of sin, but we also see repentance of sin and the fact that sin has consequences here in chapter 21. David sees his sin and pleads for God's forgiveness. This is always the right reaction and response to sin – when we see sin in our lives we should confess it. Sin always has consequences though. God appears to give David a choice as to his punishment.

We may not be given a choice of what happens to us, but still, there is consequence to sin. We may confess our sin, and God may forgive us, but sometimes the consequences still remain. If you pound nails into a board, you can remove the nails, but the holes will still be there.

**Pray:** asking God to reveal sin in your life and then confess it to Him.

**Reflect:** do I help my friends remain faithful and true to God?

*The house to be built for the LORD should be of great magnificence and fame and splendour in the sight of all the nations. (v.5)*

The Indians asked their Chief in autumn, if the winter was going to be cold or not. Not really knowing an answer, the Chief replied that the winter was going to be cold and that the members of the village were to collect wood to be prepared. Being a good leader, he then went to the phone booth and called the National Weather Service and asked, "Is this winter to be cold?" The man on the phone responded, "This winter is going to be quite cold indeed." So the Chief went back to speed up his people, to collect even more wood to be prepared. A week later he called the National Weather Service again, "Is it going to be a very cold winter?" "Yes," the man replied, "it's going to be a very cold winter." So the Chief goes back to his people and orders them to go and find every scrap of wood they can find. Two weeks later he calls the National Weather Service again, "Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?" "Absolutely" the man replies, "the Indians are collecting wood like crazy."

It is always good to be prepared. There are times in life that God wants us to be prepared for. We are always to be prepared (ready) to give an answer for the hope we have within us (1 Peter 3:15). We can only ever be prepared properly by studying His Word and applying it to our lives.

David knows that he is not going to build the temple and that Solomon his son will. He also knows that Solomon is young and inexperienced. King David wanted an "exceedingly magnificent" house built for the Lord (1 Chronicles 22:5). So before he died, he made sure his son Solomon had everything he needed to build the temple - an abundance of gold, silver, bronze, iron, timber, stone, and skilled craftsmen (v.14-15).

May we always be prepared to do our best for the Lord and to give our best to him.

**Pray:** praising God for all his wonderful attributes.

**Reflect:** am I prepared to give my best to the Lord? What does that mean in practice for me?

*When David was old and full of years. (v.1)*

This chapter opens with such a wonderful phrase. Isn't this how we would like to be described as we get older? David had lived a long and fruitful life. Yes he has made his mistakes but in the grand record of things he is described as a man after God's own heart. And now full of years you would expect him to be putting his feet up. But he isn't. Yes he installs his son Solomon as king but then he goes on to ensure everything is set up right and will work properly in order to support Solomon.

Our work does not end as we get old. We have so much wisdom and experience that it would be wrong to keep that to ourselves. There is a wonderful opportunity for us to keep praying for those who take over from us. We can also mentor them and impart our knowledge to them. There is no greater thing for a young Christian than to be mentored by a more mature member of the family.

David gathers all the leaders, priests and Levites around him. He gathered these for the purpose of organising them to help Solomon with the work of building the temple and administering the affairs of the kingdom. He divided the Levites and gave them distinct duties just as Moses had done before him (Numbers 3). Notice that the Levites who were counted for service were those thirty years and older. And remember they only served until they were fifty. Those over fifty would mentor those younger than thirty to ensure they were ready for their service in the Tabernacle.

What a responsibility we have to train up our young people for a lifetime of service. No one is too young to be given advice and the opportunity to serve alongside someone older so they can learn. So those who are full in years your responsibility is to train up those coming behind.

**Pray:** for the young adults in the church.

**Reflect:** how can I get alongside a younger person to encourage them in their walk and service.



*David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of ministering. (v.3)*

Having dealt with the roles of the Levites in the last chapter David now deals with the priests and the Levitical assistants. The priests are divided into twenty four divisions who would each serve for two weeks then head back to their own towns and cities until it was their turn on the rota to come back and serve for a further two weeks. David is making sure everything is done in an orderly fashion. At the end of their two week service they would return home and minister from there. Remember that the Levites were spread out in forty eight cities throughout the land of Israel so that no man was more than a day's journey from one of these cities. Although not ministering in the Temple all year long, the priests did serve in their own cities during the full year.

Nothing is mentioned of the significance or the functions of priesthood here although we do pick that up elsewhere. Two aspects of this service are emphasised for us though – that it is to be regulated in an orderly system of twenty four courses and that it provides a pattern to be followed by the priests' Levitical assistants. A good thing about doing it this way was that it allowed for more men to serve as priests, as well as guarding the priests from burn out and getting bored with such a holy calling.

Of course we don't have priests anymore; thanks to Jesus death on the cross the curtain in the temple was torn in two and we have direct access to God our Father ourselves. However I think this chapter emphasises for us the necessity of orderly and organised leadership in the church. Even though Christian leadership is based on God's gift rather than physical descent like the priestly line, there is still a need for leadership to be organised well.

**Pray:** for those in leadership roles within the church.

**Reflect:** how can I support and encourage our church leaders.

*All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. (v.6)*

Here we see David assemble the worship team and when it speaks of them prophesying with harps etc, don't let that confuse you. They were not necessarily foretelling but forth-telling the things of God through their music. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 we read '*But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*' Worship songs should minister to our hearts, they should build us up, they should encourage us, and they should comfort us, as we focus back on the Lord. And what a joy it is when God gives you a new song as He touches your heart, and then you share that new song with others. God can and does speak to our hearts through worship!

I want you to see that this was not some chaotic free for all, and everyone was doing their own thing. David was overseeing this ministry, keeping things in order and moving in the right direction. Yes, Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were the leaders, but it was David who ultimately was in charge. And every musician was under the supervision of their fathers. Parents have a responsibility to bring up their children well and to watch over them.

And notice too that these musicians were divided into twenty four groups just like the priests so they could each minister for two weeks in the temple. Everything done in an orderly manner.

We were created to worship and bring glory to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Whenever we see and experience the goodness of God our hearts ought to break out in praise. On this Christmas day we remember the angels bringing their song of praise to God at the birth of Jesus 'Glory to God in the highest'.

**Pray:** giving thanks to God for his most indescribable gift to us.

**Reflect:** what can I worship and praise God for today?

*These divisions of the gatekeepers, through their chief men, had duties for ministering in the temple of the LORD. (v.12)*

The gatekeepers were responsible in keeping out those that did not belong in the temple area and to allow those who did belong in. Today the pastor is a kind of gatekeeper, keeping out those false doctrines and heretical teaching that continues to blow through the church. How do they do this? By comparing what is being taught to the Word of God. Some would argue that I am being too narrow minded and I should let go. I am sorry but without the Word of God how do you know what is right and what is wrong? You don't!

As Paul told his young apprentice, Timothy *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction.'* (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2)

Other kinds of gatekeepers are those who stand on duty each Sunday at the door. They are the first face of the church people see as they come to the service. Their smile and warm welcome will welcome people in. They give the first impression of the church. As you welcome folk do it with a smile and with joy in your heart.

There is nothing dull about being on the door. Just being in God's presence, even being a doorkeeper or "porter" is far better than walking in wickedness – Psalm 84:10. These men, though it might have been a boring job to some, got the tremendous privilege of standing in God's temple, to be in God's presence. Some of the ministries of the church may not be all flash and sparkle, but what a joy to just be in God's presence, ministering!

**Pray:** giving thanks for those who welcome us to church each Sunday.

**Reflect:** do I rejoice in simply being in God's presence or do I seek the flashy jobs?

*All these were the officials in charge of King David's property. (v.31)*

David has organised the spiritual part of the kingdom and now he is working on the military part of the kingdom. And I think David has it in the right order - spiritual must always come first. You can have the best army, as the Babylonians did, and still be defeated because your heart is far from the Lord. David now divides all his military men into twelve groups or divisions, with each one having 24,000 men. These groups or divisions would serve for one month out of the year, unless of course you were in a war, and then you would be called to active duty. David's sin was trusting in his military might instead of the Lord, thus he numbered his soldiers. But that census was not completed by Joab, for before he finished, God's judgment came upon Israel.

We then see David appoint people to look after the stores, the fields, the vineyards and even the donkeys. This reminds us, I think, that everyone is important to God – no one is too young or too insignificant.

In appointing people to positions as David has I see a great reminder of what God thinks of us. Each person had a place of special service. (God chooses what we do, where we do it and to what extent it is done. No one else can do the job you have been specially designed to do!). Each person was called by name (God knows each of you by name, He cares for and keeps up with His own). Each person served in different capacities (God puts us where we are. We are to grow where He plants us!). Each person was placed where they were by the king (Anywhere the Lord places you is a special place of service. He knows where He can best use your gifts for His glory and for the edification of the whole church).

What a great blessing to be called by God into His service.

**Pray:** giving thanks to God for calling and equipping you for service.

**Reflect:** am I serving God as I ought to be?

*Solomon your son is the one who will build my house. (v.6)*

As David sees his life coming to an end, he calls for the leadership to gather around so that he can encourage them to support and assist Solomon, their new king, in the work that was to be done. David says to the people that he had it in his heart to build the temple but God had said no to him. I do not think that this means that David was not qualified to build the Temple because of the sin in his life. These things of being a “man of war” and having “shed blood” were not sins of David. These were things that David did in obedience to the Lord. You could say he had the “ministry of killing Philistines”.

But God decided that He didn't want a man of war to be building the Temple, instead He wanted it built by a man of “peace”, Solomon. This is not an issue of having disqualified yourself from ministry because of sin. This is an issue of the fact that God has certain things He wants you to do and certain things He doesn't. See where God leads and follow.

David also teaches us about the grace to let go and to let God do what God will do. I think we can start to “own” things a little too much. All we have is from the Lord. The most we can be is a good steward of what God has given to us. I think it's a little dangerous when I hear myself talking too much about “my ministry” or “my church”. It is God's ministry, it is God's church. We can start sounding a bit too much like a toddler – Here are toddler property laws: 1. If I like it, it's mine. 2. If it's in my hand, it's mine. 3. If I can take it from you, it's mine. 4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine. 5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way. 6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine. 7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine. 8. If I saw it first, it's mine. 9. If you are playing with something, and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine. 10. If it's broken, it's yours. (No, the pieces are probably still mine.) The ministry does not belong to me. It does not belong to you. It belongs to God. David understood this and encouraged Solomon to work for the Lord.

**Pray:** asking God to help us serve him as He calls us to serve.

**Reflect:** do I “own” things a little too much?

*The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. (v.9)*

At a church meeting a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith. “I’m a millionaire,” he said, “and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember that turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first dollar and I went to a church meeting that night. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and had to either give it all to God’s work or nothing at all. So at that moment I decided to give my whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, and that is why I am a rich man today.” He finished and there was an awed silence at his testimony as he moved toward his seat. As he sat down a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him: “I dare you to do it again.”

We have to be very careful with our motivations in giving. It is not about giving in order to receive. It is about cheerfully giving to the Lord our God out of all that he has done for us. And it is about remembering that all we have comes from God. David sums that up well in his prayer when he says ‘*for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.*’ And then later on ‘*wealth and honour come from you.*’

David was determined that Solomon would have the best for the temple – he knew that God deserved the very best. So he gave all his spoils from war and then sacrificially gave of his own personal wealth as well. He challenged the leaders to give their very best as well. And they did. So much so that the people rejoiced at the response of those leaders to freely and wholeheartedly give to God.

I wonder if we give our very best to the Lord – freely and wholeheartedly. And I’m not just thinking of our money – I’m thinking of our very lives. *Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*

**Pray:** offering your all to God in worship and service.

**Reflect:** do I give freely and wholeheartedly to God?

*Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people. (v.10)*

I think that sometimes I don't really have a clue as to what I need. I often respond to surface issues and not to things that really affect change for the good. There's the old saying, "You can give a man a fish, and he will be fed for one meal. You can teach a man to fish, and he will be fed the rest of his life." If I were in Solomon's shoes, I might have thought about asking for riches or honour. But he asks for wisdom. He is not afraid to admit his own weaknesses and to ask for help. He knows he cannot govern God's people on his own. He knows he does not have the wisdom and insight to achieve this. And so he asks God for this. Since he asks for the right thing, God blesses him with so much more.

Here is a soldier's prayer by an unknown confederate soldier in the States:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.  
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do greater things.  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.  
I was give life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing that I asked for -  
But got everything I had hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among all people, most richly blessed.

I think that sometimes when I pray, I'm asking for the wrong things. May we have the right attitude like Solomon and ask God for the right things in this coming year.

**Pray:** asking God to help us pray for the right things.

**Reflect:** am I willing to ask for help and guidance?

*Now I am about to build a temple for the Name of the Lord my God. (v.4)*

The story of Eric Liddell was told in the movie Chariots of Fire. He had felt the call of God to go to China as a missionary with his sister. There is a gripping scene in the movie, when he told his sister that he was going to delay going to the mission field so that he could continue training for the Olympics. She was crestfallen. He sought to help her to understand by saying, “Jenny, Jenny. I know God created me for his service, but he also made me fast! When I run, I feel God’s pleasure!”

Eric went on to compete in the Olympics. He refused to run on a Sunday, but ended up winning a gold medal in another event and turned out to be a witness for Christ to the whole world. After winning the gold medal, he went on to be a missionary in China. He knew God had a purpose for his life. He saw God use all that he had.

Solomon knows that God has a purpose for his life – he was to build the temple David had yearned to build. He firstly conscripted men to work as carriers, stone-cutters and foremen. He knew he also needed items which he and his men did not have. So he sent a letter to the king of Tyre stating his purpose, and asking for cedar for the temple just as the king had sent cedar for David to build his palace. He also asked for skilled craftsmen, cedar, pine and algum logs.

The king of Tyre responded by acknowledging that the Lord loved his people and had appointed Solomon king, and by sending the men and supplies as requested. We should never be afraid to ask for help and to involve others in our projects. None of us has all the gifts and talents to do everything on our own. The Christian church is a body made up of many parts – let’s make sure we invite others to join us in our service.

Solomon saw God’s purpose for him. What is God’s purpose for your life? Where is God calling you to serve? What is he calling you to do?

**Pray:** asking God to reveal His purpose for your life in this coming year?

**Reflect:** am I willing to serve God this coming year?