

# **The Ideal United Kingdom (1 Chronicles 9:35 – 2 Chronicles 9:31)**

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David Prepares for the Temple, part 8:  
David Transfers Power and Responsibility to Solomon, part 1:  
Those Whom David Gathered (1 Chronicles 23:1–27:34)

## **David Transfers Power and Responsibility to Solomon (23:1-29:25)**

After his commission to build, David gathered the leaders of Israel and publicly appointed Solomon to the throne of Israel so he could take up his role as temple builder. This material balances with 17:1-27 in that it brings to completion the commission David received as the one who would prepare for Solomon (see figure 16).

### *Comparison of 23:1-29:25 with Samuel and Kings*

These chapters make up the Chronicler's largest single addition to Samuel and Kings. 22:1-29:30 amounts to the Chronicler's substitution for 1 Kgs 1:1-2:9 and 2:13-3:3.

The book of Kings indicates that the transfer of the scepter to Solomon took place amid severe political struggles (see 1 Kgs 1:1-2:46). Adonijah sought the throne and David's court divided between supporters of Adonijah and Solomon. Once this initial struggle was over, Solomon eliminated his political opponents.

The omission of these events reveals the Chronicler's unique perspective. The political intrigues of Solomon's rise were insignificant to his purposes. Instead of reviewing how Solomon overcame great obstacles to become king, the Chronicler focused on the way in which David had purposed to make Solomon his successor.

### *Structure of 23:1-29:25*

This material divides into two large sections introduced by a title (see figure 16). The opening verse explains that David made Solomon king (23:1). This transfer of power

divides into two large segments. First, lists summarize those whom David assembled to make Solomon king (23:2-27:34). Second, the Chronicler recorded what occurred at the assembly (28:1-29:25).

### *David Makes Solomon King (23:1)*

This verse indicates that the Chronicler had arrived at David's last act as the king of Israel. As the rest of this section will demonstrate, David made his son king for the expressed purpose of building the temple.

### *Those Whom David Gathered (23:2-27:34)*

The Chronicler began his record of the transfer of power to Solomon with extensive lists of those whom David gathered for his assembly. The considerable length and details of these lists create an atmosphere of splendid national unity in support of David and Solomon (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

The end of this section indicates that this final assembly of David's reign was the time when Israel acknowledged Solomon as king and Zadok as priest (see 29:22). In all likelihood, the Chronicler had in mind the events of 1 Kgs 1:38-53 at which time David publicly acknowledged Solomon as king against the claims of Adonijah. It is apparent, therefore, that the Chronicler saw Adonijah's opposition to Solomon as relatively insignificant (see 1 Kgs 1:5-11).

### *Structure of 23:2-27:34*

The record of those who David gathered begins with an introductory summary followed by two lists (see figure 16). The Chronicler's lists first identify the various groups gathered (23:2). Priests and Levites are described in four segments (23:2-26:32). Military and civilian leaders comprise the second grouping (27:1-34). Their descriptions of the assembly itself follow (28:1-29:25) and indicate that the preceding lists are only representative (elders/officers of the tribe: 28:1; 29:6,24; military commanders: 28:1; 29:6,24; managers of royal property: 28:1; 29:6; sons of David: 29:24). These four chapters portray the assembly as including the full range of Israel's leadership.

*Introduction (23:2)*

This lengthy list forms a general introduction which mentions **all the leaders of Israel, as well as the priests and Levites** (23:2). The terminology **all** emphasized the theme of unified support for Solomon along the lines of the Chronicler's "all Israel" theme (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). The three categories of **leaders, priests, and Levites** appear in the lists that follow but in reverse order: Levites and priests (23:3-26:32) and leaders (27:1-34).

*Levites and Priests (23:3-26:32)*

The Chronicler first listed the Levites and priests. This material divides into five main parts: the registry and divisions of Levites (23:3-5), Levites and priests who worked closely together (23:6-24:31), Levitical singers (25:1-31), gatekeepers (26:1-19), and officials and judges (26:20-32).

*Registries and Divisions of Levites (23:3-5)*

These registries and divisions of Levites (23:3-5) include only those Levites who were **thirty years old or more** (23:3). In an effort to guide the practices of his post exilic readers, however, the Chronicler noted later that **the last instructions of David** were to count **those twenty years old or more** (23:27).

The number of Levites was set at **thirty-eight thousand** (23:3). It is possible to understand these numbers in ways that considerably lower the actual count. (For the Chronicler's use of large numbers of soldiers see comments on 12:24-37.)

David divided the Levites into four groups presented here in the order of their sizes (23:3-5). Each group is then described in expanded form later in this section (see 23:6-26:32). Comparisons between this summary and the following expanded lists help to identify each group (see figure 20).

Survey of Divisions (23:3-5)	Lists (23:6-26:32)
Supervising (23:4)	Levites with Priests (23:6-24:31)
Officials and Judges (23:4)	Singers (25:1-31)
Gatekeepers (23:5)	Gatekeepers (26:1-19)
Singers (23:5)	Officials and Judges (26:20-32)

*Comparison of 1 Chr 23:3-5 with 23:6-26:32 (figure 20)*

The largest group (24,000) were to **supervise the work of the temple** (23:4). This designation is not altogether clear. From 23:6-24:31, however, it seems best to assume that the Chronicler was indicating those Levites who directly assisted the twenty four divisions of priests. The second group of Levites (6,000) were to be **officials and judges** (23:4). This group is described more fully in 26:20-32. The third group of Levites (4,000) consists of **gatekeepers** (23:5). For duties performed by gatekeepers see comments on 26:1-19. This division appears again in 26:1-32. The fourth group consists of those who **praise the Lord with musical instruments** (23:5); they are the **singers** mentioned in 25:1-31.

*Priests and Levites Together (23:6-24:31)*

These expanded lists include both Levites and priests (**sons of Aaron** [28:1]). These Levites stand out because they served along side of the Aaronic priests. As the Chronicler noted several times in this section, they **served in the temple** (23:24), and were **in the service of the temple of the Lord** and performed **other duties at the house of God** (23:28). All of their work was done **for the service of the temple** (23:32).

These lists begin with the three familial divisions of the descendants of Levi (23:6-27); they then turn to the responsibilities of Levites who served in close conjunction with the priests (23:28-32); next the descendants of Aaron (the priests) appear (24:1-19); finally the Chronicler added another list of Levites not mentioned previously (24:20-31).

*Levites Divided by Families (23:6-27)*

The familial divisions of the tribe of Levi (23:7-27) begin with an introduction (23:6), and mention **Gershonites** (23:7-11), the **sons of Kohath** (23:12-20), and the **sons of Merari** (23:21-23). These divisions are followed by a concluding explanatory note (23:24-27). For a fuller description of the family divisions of the tribe of Levi see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*.

With only a few exceptions, most of the names appearing here do not occur in the Chronicler's earlier genealogies of Levi (see 6:1-80). These differences can be understood when we remember that the terminology **sons of** can mean "descendants of." Biblical genealogies frequently skip generations without notice (see *Part One: Overview of Genealogies*). The Chronicler's purpose was not to give a comprehensive lineage, but to show that descendants of all Levitical families oversaw the work of the

temple. Moreover, he wanted to point out that representatives of all the Levitical families supported the transfer of power to Solomon.

23:13 reflects the Chronicler's keen interest in the details of David's arrangements. He listed the descendants of Aaron in the next chapter (24:1-19), but paused here to indicate that the Aaronic priests were specially **set apart ... to consecrate ... offer sacrifice ... minister ... and to pronounce blessings in his name forever** (23:13). Like Ezekiel before him (see Ezk 40:46; 43:19; 44:15-16; 48:11), the Chronicler believed David's order established that only the Zadokite priests had responsibilities for the central operations of temple service. No other family was to usurp that role. Moreover, the Chronicler highlighted once again that these ministries were to be performed **in his name** (23:13). The presence of God's Name in the temple provided accessibility to divine presence and power (see *Introduction: 11 Name of God*). This expansion of the Kohathite genealogy indicated the Chronicler's desire to see the temple service of the post-exilic community follow the Davidic pattern.

The Chronicler also added a notice regarding the **sons of Moses** (23:14-20) and listed the names of members of this family serving in the days of David (23:15-20). Once again, the Chronicler's concern with Solomon's widespread support and for the re-ordering of post-exilic worship is evident.

The familial divisions of Levi close with an explanation (23:24-27). Earlier David only registered **Levites thirty years old or more** (23:3). At this point the text explains that David began to count the Levites from **twenty years old** (23:24). The king changed the minimum registration age once the ark was in Jerusalem and **the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle** (23:26). He felt younger Levites could carry on the services in Jerusalem. Apparently, the services in Jerusalem were expanded to the point that more workers were needed. This closing remark also reflected the Chronicler's concern with the age of Levitical service in his own day.

#### *Levitical Duties Alongside Priests (23:28-32)*

Following his broad list of Levites serving alongside the Aaronic priests, the Chronicler added a more detailed description of their duties (23:28-32). In general terms, these Levites were **to help Aaron's descendants** (23:28). In other words, they were servants assisting the priests in their many duties. The Chronicler listed eleven specific areas of duties for these Levites: 1) **courtyards** (23:28), 2) **side rooms** (23:28), 3) **purification** (23:28), 4) **other duties** (23:28), 5) **bread set out** (23:29), 6) **flour for the grain offerings** (23:29), 7) **unleavened wafers** (23:29), 8) **baking and mixing** (23:29), 9) **all measurements** (23:29), 10) **to thank and praise** (23:30), 11)

**burnt offerings ... on Sabbaths ... New Moon festivals ... and at appointed feasts** (23:31). This extensive list of duties reveals the Chronicler's interest in sketching the appropriate duties of Levites in post-exilic times.

The Chronicler closed this section with the note that all of these duties were to be done **regularly in the proper number and in the prescribed way** (23:31) at the **Tent of Meeting and the Holy Place** (23:32). Yet, these Levites were not independent in their work with these things. They were **under their brothers, the descendants of Aaron** (23:32).

The subordination of the Levites to the priests was a critical issue in the post-exilic community. Many of those exiled to Babylon were Aaronic (Zadokite) priests. When they returned from Babylon under the leadership of Joshua the Zadokite high priest, questions rose over who would be in charge of these most sacred duties. The prophet Ezekiel made it clear that the Zadokites were to lead the Levites (see Ezk 40:46; 44:10-16; 48:11). The Chronicler took the same stance in his history (see *Introduction: 5) Royal and Levitical Families*).

#### *Priests Divided (24:1-19)*

The third segment concerning Levites and priests together focuses on the divisions of the sons of Aaron (24:1-19). The Chronicler introduced the priests of David's day with general background information (24:1-2). He noted the four sons of Aaron: **Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar** (24:1a). He then mentioned that the first two **died before their father did** (24:1b). He referred to divine judgment against Nadab and Abihu for their "unauthorized fire" described in Leviticus 10:1-3 and Numbers 3:2-4. Only Eleazar and Ithamar had descendants who carried on the priestly line.

Following this general background, the Chronicler recorded how David divided the remaining families of priests (24:3-5). **With the help of Zadok** (24:3), the sole high priest of Solomon's reign, **David separated them into divisions** (24:3). The descendants of Eleazar were twice as numerous as those of Ithamar (24:4). Yet, the various duties of each priest were determined **impartially by drawing lots** (24:5). The Chronicler mentioned the use of lots on a number of occasions to indicate that an action was entirely directed by God. No human prejudice was involved in the division of duties among priestly families (see 6:54; 24:7,31; 25:8,9; 26:13,14,16; see also Lev 16:18; Josh 18:6,8,10; 1 Sam 14:42; Neh 10:34; 11:1; Job 6:27; Ps 22:18; Prov 16:33; Joel 3:3; Obad 1:11; Jon 1:7; Nah 3:10; Lk 1:8-9; Acts 1:26).

The Chronicler closed this material on the priests by noting the record of their divisions (24:6-19). Apparently, some question had been raised in the post-exilic community regarding the division of duties among the priests. For this reason, the Chronicler validated his divisions in three ways. First, he mentioned that this list was made before many witnesses: the **king, officials, Zadok, Abiathar, heads of families of priests and Levites** (24:6). Second, he pointed out that both remaining priestly families were divided equally into twenty-four divisions (24:7-19). Every other assignment was **taken from Eleazar ... and from Ithamar** (24:6). The twenty-four divisions were established to provide for regular rotation of duties among the priestly families (compare Luke 1:8-9). They may also correspond to the registry of twenty-four thousand (or "divisions") Levites mentioned earlier (23:4). Third, the Chronicler pointed to the authority behind these priestly divisions by noting that they were true to the **regulations of Aaron, as the Lord ... had commanded him** (24:19). The Chronicler's attention to these matters reveals his keen interest in presenting David's Levitical order as authoritative for the post-exilic community.

#### *Levites Remaining (24:20-31)*

The fourth section of Levites and priests together (24:20-31) consists of lists (24:20b-30) and concluding remarks (24:31). The expression **the rest of the descendants** (24:20) and the repetition of names from the preceding context connects this passage with the Levites who worked closely with the Aaronic priests (23:6-32). In many cases, however, these lists extend the previous passage by one generation. To address issues that must have been relevant in his own day, the Chronicler noted that these Levites also received duties by the casting of **lots** before **King David, Zadok, Ahimelech**, and Aaronic and levitical **heads of families** (24:31). For the Chronicler's outlook on the use of lots see comments on 24:5. Moreover, he noted that **the oldest brother was treated the same as ... the youngest** (24:31). Such details most likely spoke to specific controversies faced as the post-exilic community sought to order the duties of its worship personnel.

#### *Singers (25:1-31)*

This lengthy sketch of musicians whom David assembled reveals the Chronicler's special interest in music (see *Introduction: 8) Music*; 15:16-24). His material divides into two sections: families of singers (25:1-8), and divisions of duties (25:9-31).

This record of the families of singers (25:1-8) begins with an introduction (25:1) which mentions several important facts. First, not only **David**, but **the commanders of the army** also established the order of musicians. As the Chronicler pointed out elsewhere, Levitical music took place both in worship and in war (see 2 Chr 20:22 see also *Introduction: 8) Music*).

Second, the musical Levites were selected from three families: **Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun** (25:1). This note follows the normal biblical divisions (see 1 Chr 6:33,39; 15:17,19; 16:37-42; 2 Chr 5:12; 29:12-14; 35:15; Neh 11:17).

Third, these Levites had responsibility for **prophesying** accompanied by instruments (25:1). From early times in Israel's history, prophets often gave their oracles set to music (see 1 Sam 10:5; 2 Kgs 3:15). The Chronicler himself acknowledged this role for Levites on several occasions (see 25:3; 2 Chr 20:14; 35:15; see *Introduction: 15) Prophets*). Similar prophetic activities for Levites appear in a number of places in Scripture (see Ezek 1:3; Jdg 18:5; 1 Sam 1:17; 22:13-15; Jer 1:1-2; see also *Introduction: 8) Music*).

The lists of singers (25:2-4) follow the pattern established in 25:1: **Asaph** (25:2), **Jeduthun** (25:3), and **Heman** (25:4-5). The first two of these men are said to have **prophesied** (25:2,3). **Heman** is designated as **the king's seer** (25:5), an ancient synonym for "prophet" (see 1 Sam 9:9). Many Levites were under the supervision of these heads of Israel's musicians; some of them are listed here by name with their fathers (25:2-5).

The families of singers close with a general description of duties (25:6-8). The instruments listed here (**cymbals, lyres and harps** [25:6]) are but a sampling. Moreover, these men were all **trained and skilled in music for the Lord** (25:7). As in a number of cases, the Chronicler noted that these musicians were well-prepared for their work (see 1 Chr 15:22; 2 Chr 34:12; see also *Introduction: 8) Music*). Finally, the Chronicler noted that these Levites were assigned duties like others before them (24:31). They **cast lots for their duties** no matter what age or level of experience (25:8). For the Chronicler's outlook on the use of lots see comments on 24:5.

Following the record of the families of singers, the Chronicler turned to more specific reflection on duties (25:9-31). Once again, he noted that these Levites received their responsibilities by **lot** to indicate that the design was from God (25:9). For the Chronicler's outlook on the use of lots see comments on 24:5. Also, the divisions of the musicians number twenty-four. This number of divisions has appeared before (24:7-18), probably indicating an annual rotation pattern. The Chronicler's attention to these details reveals that he believed the proper observance of music rituals was very important.



The Chronicler's attention to these extensive details on the selection, organization, training, and duties of the musicians in David's day was not simply to inform his readers of the past. He set forth patterns that were to be imitated by the post-exilic community as it re-established proper worship of God. The restored people of God were to follow the patterns of music established by David in hope of receiving fuller blessings of restoration (see *Introduction: 8) Music*).

### *Gatekeepers (26:1-19)*

The Chronicler's record of the gatekeepers whom David gathered divides into two parts: families of the gatekeepers (26:1-11) and the divisions of duties (26:12-19). Gatekeepers were Levites who had a number of responsibilities. In addition to guarding temple gates (26:16b), they were in charge of equipment (9:23), treasuries (9:27), contributions (2 Kgs 12:9; 22:43; 2 Chr 31:14), articles for temple service (9:28), furnishings, oil, spices (9:29), mixing spices (9:30), baking offering bread (9:31), setting bread for Sabbath (9:32), music (9:33), chambers and supply rooms (23:28; 26:20-29), preparation of baked goods (see Ex 25:30), and supplies and furnishings (see 28:13-18).

The assignment of Levites to these duties was an important goal for the Chronicler. For this reason, he paused to list their families and duties. Only two of the three Levitical families served as gatekeepers (Korahites, and Merarites, but not Gershonites). First, the passage touches on the **Korahites** (26:2-9), and **Meshelemiah** (26:1,2,9). A list of the sons of **Obed-Edom** (26:4) is imbedded within the discussion of **Meshelemiah** (26:4-8). The Chronicler's note (**for God had blessed Obed-Edom**) (26:5), alludes to 2 Sam 6:10 and clarifies that this is the Gittite who cared for the ark of the covenant (see 13:13-14 // 2 Sam 6:10-11). Second, the sons of Merari come into view in 26:10-11. Select Merarites also served as gatekeepers. The Chronicler had little to say about the Merarites, except that Shimri's **father had appointed him the first** (26:10). Perhaps some of the Chronicler's original readers wondered why the firstborn did not receive a prominent appointment.

The division of duties among gatekeepers (26:12-19) begins with the manner in which divisions were made (26:12-13). The gatekeepers did it **just as their relatives had** (26:12). In other words, **lots were cast for each gate** to insure divine guidance (26:13). For the Chronicler's outlook on the use of lots see comments on 24:5.

Following this general introduction, the Chronicler listed those families responsible for various gates (26:14-18). He mentioned the **East Gate, North Gate, South Gate, and West Gate** (26:14-16). Similar designations appear in Ezekiel's description of the post-exilic temple (see Ezek 40). These gatekeepers supervised

entering and exiting from the temple. They stood **guard ... alongside of guard** (26:16b; i.e. next to each other) in groups of two, four, and six (26:17-1). Once again, the detail which this account offers suggests strongly that the Chronicler was directing his readers in the arrangements for the temple in his own day.

26:19 closes the section of gatekeepers. It simply notes that all of the gatekeepers were from the two families of **Korah and Merari** (see 26:1-11).

#### *Officers and Judges (26:20-32)*

After dealing with the Levites who were designated for temple service, the Chronicler turned to other Levites whom David gathered. This passage recalls the Chronicler's previous mention of **officials and judges** (26:29; see 23:9).

This passage presents many difficulties, but the main idea is clear. The family of **Ladan the Gershonite** (26:21) was in charge of **temple treasuries** (26:1). This list extends over 26:21-22. 26:23 indicates other families who had similar tasks. The sons of **Gershom son of Moses** (26:24) were included here (26:24-28). They were in charge of **things dedicated** (26:26) and the **plunder** (26:27) as well as things dedicated by **Samuel the seer** (26:28). Other Kohathites from the **Izrahites** worked **away from the temple** (26:29). Their duties probably included such things as teaching (see Deut 33:10), and judging (see Deut 17:9). **Hebronites** (26:30) were divided into those who were **responsible in Israel west of the Jordan** (26:30) and those who worked east of Jordan (26:32). The latter group not only dealt with **every matter pertaining to God**, but also **the affairs of the king** (26:32). For similar divisions of duties, see 2 Chr 19:11.

In this passage the Chronicler offered his understanding of how widely the Levites served in David's kingdom. They not only worked in the temple, but also handled many worship and social duties throughout the kingdom of Israel. As in other sections of this material, concern with details probably reflected his desire to see such arrangements followed in post-exilic times.

#### *Military and Civilian Leaders (27:1-34)*

Having covered the priests and Levites whom David gathered (23:3-26:32), the Chronicler turned next to other leaders who came together for Solomon's coronation (27:1-34). His record divides into two sections: military leadership (27:1-24) and civilian leadership (27:25-34). Many of the names appearing here occur also in 11:11ff, but we cannot be sure which of these names represent the same persons.

One interesting feature of these lists is that each one divides into twelve units: commanders of twelve army divisions (27:1-15), twelve officers over the tribes (27:16-22) and twelve overseers of royal property (27:25-34). This numerical parallel suggests that the Chronicler intended these passages to symbolize that the leadership of all tribes supported the upcoming transfer of royal power to Solomon (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

#### *Military Leaders (27:1-24)*

The military leaders appear in two lists: leaders of army divisions (27:1-15) and officers of the tribes (27:16-24). First, the text presents a list of the military divisional officers (27:1-15). These leaders **were on duty month by month throughout the year** (27:1). Here the Chronicler presented a description of David's permanent standing army, not a voluntary militia. This development in David's military organization may shed some light on his motivation for the census of 21:1-22:1. Originally, Israel was to have a militia formed by volunteers as circumstances required. In fact, Mosaic Law looked negatively on the development of large standing armies (see Deut 17:16). In all events, the leaders of David's army were commanders of twelve divisions which served David one month each year.

Each division is said to have **24,000 men** within it (see 27:1,2,4,5,7,8,9-15). As with other passages where large numbers of men are mentioned, it is possible that the Hebrew word translated "thousand" may have been a military term indicating a group of less than a thousand men. (For the Chronicler's use of large numbers of soldiers see comments on 12:24-37.)

Second, the Chronicler listed **the officers of the tribes** (27:16-24). This list is unusual for this context because it does not provide the numbers of men. Instead, this record divides between lists (27:16-22) and an explanation of why no numbers appear (27:23). The precise responsibilities of these officers are not evident. Instead, the focus of these lists is on the extent of those who gathered to make Solomon king. They represented all of the tribes of Israel. The Chronicler emphasized his "all Israel" theme again (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

27:23-24 explains why the numbers of these men were not available. The Chronicler identified these lists with the census of 21:1-22:1. He noted several details of that event which made it impossible to give statistics. 1) David followed Moses' example and did not number **the men twenty years old or less** (27:23; see Num 11:1-19). 2) Joab did not finish the count (27:24a). 3) The **wrath** of God was so great that **the number was not entered in the book of the annals of King David** (27:24b). For other examples of census in Chronicles see 2 Chr 2:17; 14:8; 17:14-19; 25:6.

Despite the lack of numbers, the Chronicler's list made it clear that David gathered widespread support from the officers. They were part of a great assembly for the transfer of power to Solomon.

*Civilian Leaders (27:25-34)*

The final group of leaders mentioned are **officials in charge of David's property** (27:31). The closing summary of 27:31b indicates that this material divides between twelve representative officials (27:25-31) and a set of remaining leaders (27:32-34).

The first section (27:25-31) lists a number of items managed by these leaders: **storehouses** and **watchtowers** (27:25), **field workers** (27:26), **vineyards** (27:27), **olive and fig groves** (27:28), **olive oil** (27:28), **herds** (27:29), **camels and donkeys** (27:30), and **flocks** (27:31). Kings in the ancient world had many private holdings. David was no exception. Those in charge of these properties also gathered at the assembly.

The final verses of this section (27:32-34) add a number of leaders not accounted for in the previous material. These men also played a variety of important roles in David's kingdom.

The extensive nature of these lists indicates that the Chronicler wanted to impress his readers with the fact that all of Israel supported Solomon as they had David. Moreover, just as support for the temple builder was widespread in David's day, the re-establishment of the temple and its services in the Chronicler's day required extensive support by military and civilian leaders.