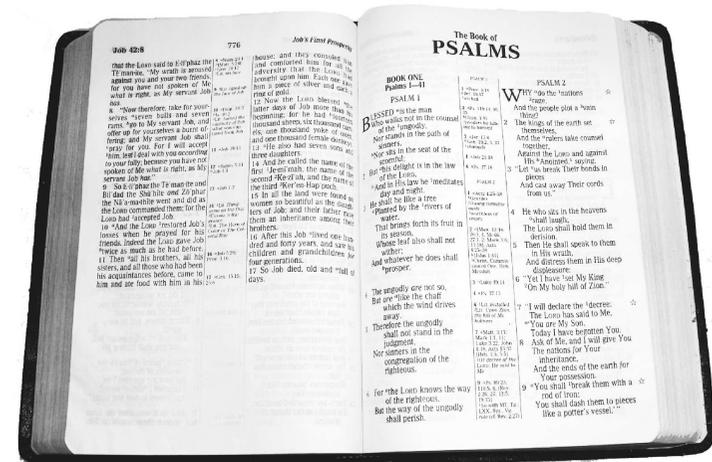


PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



July 2019

1 Chronicles

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A THOUGHT ON THE SEA-SHORE

*In every object here I see
Something, O Lord, that leads to thee:
Firm as the rocks thy promise stands,
Thy mercies countless as the sands,
Thy love a sea immensely wide,
Thy grace an ever-flowing tide.*

*In every object here I see,
Something, my heart, that points at thee:
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,
Unfruitful as the barren sand,
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,
And like the tides, in constant motion*

(John. Newton)

David blessed the LORD

David was much encouraged by the generous giving of the people for the building of the temple (9,17) and he poured out his heart in worship and praise to God (10–19). *David blessed the LORD* and commanded the people to do the same (10, 20). God’s blessing of men is different from men blessing God. When God blesses men, he bestows favour and mercies upon them. When men bless God, they speak well of him, adoring him for his greatness, praising him for all his blessings. How did David bless the Lord?

- He worshipped God for his surpassing greatness. ‘*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty*’ (11).
- He acknowledged the sovereignty of God. ‘*Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honour come from you, and you reign over all*’ (11–12; cp. Matthew 6:13).
- He rejoiced in God’s goodness to himself and to his people (13–16). When we bless the Lord, we will find that there will be little time for a complaining attitude.
- He worshipped God with joy (9,17). Reverence and humility in worship (20) do not exclude gladness!

David prayed that the people would remain willing in their desire to give to the work of the Lord and that God would fix their heart toward himself (18). When our heart is fixed towards God, we will not be distracted from serving him. He then prayed that God would give Solomon a loyal heart to keep his commandments and to build the temple (19). The book closes with a description of the sacrifices and festivities when Solomon was anointed as king, and with a brief summary of David’s reign (21–30).

Do you bless the Lord when you pray or are you only concerned that God blesses you? *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth* (Psalm 34:1).

1 CHRONICLES

The first book of Chronicles covers the same period of Israel’s history as the books of Samuel, some chapters being very similar (eg. 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17). According to Jewish tradition, the author of Chronicles was Ezra. The last verses of 2 Chronicles are similar to the opening verses of Ezra. There is in Chronicles, a greater emphasis on the religious life of the nation than in the books of Samuel and the Kings. Those aspects of David’s reign dealing with the preparation for the building of the temple are prominent in 1 Chronicles.

Outline of 1 Chronicles1. Genealogies (chapters 1 to 9)

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| a. Genealogies from Adam to Israel (Jacob) | 1:1–54. |
| b. Genealogies of the tribes of Israel | 2:1 to 9:44 |

2. The reign of David (chapters 10 to 29)

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| a. The death of Saul | 10:1–14 |
| b. David made king | 11:1–9 |
| c. David’s mighty men and his army | 11:10 to 12:40 |
| d. David and the ark of the covenant | 13:1 to 16:43 |
| e. God’s covenant with David | 17:1–27 |
| f. David’s conquests | 18:1 to 20:8 |
| g. David’s sin and its consequences | 21:1–30 |
| h. David prepares for building the temple | 22:1–19 |
| i. The Levites and their duties | 23:1 to 26:32 |
| j. Leaders of the nation | 27:1–34 |
| k. David instructs Solomon to build the temple | 28:1 to 29:30 |

For further reading: I commend: ‘A Family Tree – 1 Chronicles simply explained’ by Andrew Stewart, published by Evangelical Press.

Adam, Seth, Enosh ...

1 Chronicles begins with a list of names that continues through the first nine chapters. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable ...* (2 Timothy 3:16). You may wonder how long lists of names can be profitable to us? Why has God given us these family trees which trace the descent of Israel from Adam? These lists were given to remind the exiles returning from Babylon of the spiritual history of Israel and of God's dealings with their forefathers. Andrew Stewart writes, 'To people from Western cultures this might seem a rather off-putting introduction to a book, more reminiscent of an electoral register than of Scripture. Yet for cultures with a strong emphasis on family roots such lists have a ready message. As we read through these lists, it is as though we are visiting a relative and are led into the best room to find that it is well-stocked with family photographs. Along with each of those familiar faces there are memories to be cherished, lessons to be learned and debts to be acknowledged, and the cumulative effect is a sense of belonging and blessing.' (A FAMILY TREE – 1 CHRONICLES SIMPLY EXPLAINED, page 22).

Adam, Seth, Enosh ... (1). The Bible never treats Adam as a mythical figure. He is a real person whom God created and from whom we have all descended. This family tree is not only of interest to the Jews. We are all descended from Noah whose three sons and their families are listed in verses 4 to 27. The family tree of the Edomites, who descended from Jacob's twin brother Esau, is found in verses 38–54.

Abraham descended from Shem, one of Noah's sons (24–27). He is the spiritual ancestor of every Christian. *If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Galatians 3:29). **Christian, you belong to a great family and you have priceless privileges in the Lord Jesus Christ.** Your name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20). You have forgiveness and cleansing from sin, you have peace with God, you have eternal life and glory awaiting you. God is your heavenly Father, and you can come to him in prayer, knowing that he delights to hear you. How encouraging!

Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?

David again addressed those assembled, calling upon them to follow his example in providing for the house of God and to give Solomon their support in the work. Though David was not permitted to build the temple, he was lavish in his giving for it. He told the people, *'I have set my affection on the house of my God'* (1–3). He had challenged Solomon to serve God with a loyal heart and a willing mind (28:9) and he now challenged the people, *'Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?'* (5). The people would have associated consecration with the priests in their service for the Lord, but here they were all challenged to consecrate themselves to God. They responded by giving generously to the temple building fund and this greatly encouraged David (6–9). He then poured out his heart in worship and praise to God (10–19).

Let us think about consecration for a moment. We are easily influenced by the self-seeking, self-gratifying attitudes of the world around us, but we are not to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1–2). There is far too much shallow Christianity around us but we must be different if we are to please God. **God's work is great (1) and it requires whole-hearted devotion. Consecration shows in our lives:**

- It is seen in our affections (3; cp. Colossians 3:1–5).
- It is seen in generous giving to God's work. It is God who prospers us and when we give to him, we are only returning to him what rightfully belongs to him (9,14). We should always remember that we are pilgrims here and that we cannot take our possessions with us into the next world (15)!
- It leads to great joy and satisfaction (9).

How are things with you? Have you grown cold in your love to the Lord? Do not put off your response to the challenge of God's Word. Now is the time to consecrate yourself to the Lord, not tomorrow. *'Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?'*

Know the God of your father, and serve him with a loyal heart

David now turned to address Solomon and gave him a twofold charge: ‘*Know the God of your father, and serve him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind*’ (9). A personal relationship with God was vital for Solomon and it is also essential for us if we are to serve him acceptably. How can we serve God if we do not know him! To know God is to love him, to have fellowship with him and to obey him. Do you really know God? If you do not know the Lord, there is an encouraging promise in verse 9 – ‘*If you seek him, he will be found of you.*’ If you seek God by coming to him in prayer and by listening to what he has to say to you through his Word (the Bible), you will find him.

How are we to serve God? We must serve him ‘*with a loyal heart and with a willing mind.*’ (9). Are you loyal to the Lord so that you persevere in following him? Do you have an eager, willing mind to apply yourself to do his work, whatever the difficulties?

David also warned Solomon that if he forsook God, he would be cast off by God (9). He then reminded Solomon that God had chosen him to build the temple. He was to ‘*be strong and do it*’ (10). **If you want to be strong in the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:10), you must build yourself up on the Word of God and cultivate a disciplined prayer life. Many Christians are very weak and unstable because they neglect these things.**

David had been given detailed plans for the temple and the work of the Levites by the Holy Spirit; he passed these on to Solomon (11–22,19). He again encouraged his son, ‘*Be strong, and of good courage, and do it, do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God — my God — will be with you*’ (20). No work for the Lord is easy! Satan will always seek to discourage us and to hinder us and there will be difficulties and disappointments, but if God is with us and for us, what have we to fear (cp. Romans 8:31)?

Jabez was more honourable than his brothers

We could profitably take many individuals listed in 1 Chronicles and ponder the lessons drawn from their lives, but to do this would take many months of readings from other books of the Bible, which we cover at other times. We will today, focus on a lesser known character whose name is found in the family tree of Judah.

Now Jabez was more honourable than his brothers (9). His birth had been difficult, giving his mother more pain than was usual in childbirth, hence his name Jabez which means, ‘he causes pain’. He may have been weak or disabled because of his difficult birth, but he was more honourable than his brothers. He was a godly, prayerful man and that made all the difference in his life.

- He called upon God to bless him and to enlarge his territory. He was aware of his dependence upon God and prayed for strength to possess the land in Israel that had been allocated to him. He desired that God would be with him, working for him (10).
- He prayed, ‘*Keep me from evil*’. This echoes the request in the Lord’s Prayer, ‘*But deliver us from the evil one*’ (Matthew 6:13). This clause is translated, ‘*keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain*’ in the ESV and some other modern translations.
- He did not want to *cause pain* (10). He could not help causing pain at his birth, but he knew that sinful behaviour causes pain to others. He was determined, with the help of God, that he would not hurt other people. May we always seek to be a blessing to others rather than causing them pain by thoughtless words or actions.

Seek to be honourable like Jabez. Discipline yourself to call upon God every day, praying that you will know the blessing of being kept from evil. Prayerful dependence upon God will make all the difference to your life!

He heeded their prayer because they put their trust in him

These verses explain why the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, was not the foremost among the tribes of Israel. Reuben had forfeited his birthright because he took his father's concubine and defiled his father's bed (1; cp. Genesis 35:22; 49:3–4). Jacob gave the birthright to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and his special blessing to the younger son, Ephraim (2; Genesis 48:17–20). Jacob chose Ephraim, but God chose Judah! The tribe of Ephraim rebelled against God and was rejected (Psalm 78:9–11, 67–68).

It is significant that Judah was a son of Leah and not of Rachel who was Jacob's favourite. Leah was unwanted and unloved by Jacob, who had been tricked into marrying her (Genesis 29:31–32) but God had gracious and glorious purposes for her. The Lord Jesus came through the line of her fourth son, Judah. The ways of God are strange and wonderful! Christian, if you feel that you are unloved, remember that God loves you and cares for you.

Mention is made of a battle in which the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh living on the east of the Jordan fought the Hagarites (18–22). Their army consisted of valiant and well-trained soldiers, but this was not enough. They may have been overwhelmed by their enemy, but *they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in him* (20). Sadly, they did not remain faithful to the Lord and became idol worshippers. He punished them for their wickedness and delivered them into Assyrian captivity (23–26).

We need to be strong in the Lord but we can never afford to be complacent in the Christian life (Ephesians 6:10). Do you really trust in God when you pray, do you expect him to hear your prayers? If you pray with an unbelieving heart, you do not please the Lord! **Are you struggling because of discouragement or some severe trial? Are you battling with temptation? Put your trust in God! He will never fail you.**

Seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God

David assembled all the leaders of Israel to confirm Solomon as his successor to the throne of Israel (1,5; cp. 23:1–2). He reminded them that God had chosen him to be king over Israel and told them of the Lord's dealings with him concerning his desire to build the temple (2–4). He also told them that God had chosen Solomon to be the next king of Israel (5).

David urged his leaders, *'Be careful to seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God'* (8). This was the only way for them to know God's blessing and the same principle still holds good today! If we want to know how God would have us lead our lives, we too must seek out and obey all the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:15). How are we to seek out these commandments? We should pray that God will speak to us through the preaching of his Word and we must listen well. We should read the Bible thoughtfully and prayerfully with a humble and submissive attitude. When we joyfully obey the commands of God which are found in his Word, we will know his smile on our lives and enjoy his blessing without seeking for it (cp. Deuteronomy 28:2).

There is all the difference in the world between chasing after sensational experiences to obtain an emotional uplift and a self-denying love for the Lord which delights to obey him. *'Be careful to seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God'* and to obey them!

*But we never can prove
The delights of his love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour he shows,
And the joy he bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.*

(James H. Samnis)

Who were instructed in the songs of the LORD

The twenty-four divisions of musicians and singers are listed in this chapter. They belonged to the families of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthan and were appointed to *prophesy with harps, stringed instruments and cymbals* (1). The word ‘*prophesied*’ is found in verses 2 and 3. They set to music words which were inspired by God. The sons of Jeduthan *prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD* (3). Heman is described as ‘*the kings seer*’ (or ‘prophet’ – verse 5). Psalms 50 and 73 to 83 were all written by Asaph and Psalm 88 by Heman. Jeduthan is mentioned in the title heading of Psalms 39, 62 and 77, though he did not write these psalms. The musicians were under the supervision of the king (6).

The sons in these families were trained by their fathers and *were instructed in the songs of the LORD* to become skilful in their service (7–8). Andrew Stewart writes, ‘To do anything well requires dedicated effort, and the praise of God is no exception. If we are to praise God from the heart we must study to understand the words we sing, meditating on their rich spiritual meaning; and if we are to commend God by the way we praise him, congregations of his people must spare no effort to ensure that their praise is as tuneful and excellent as possible. Otherwise God’s worship is treated with contempt ... The Chronicler notes the responsibilities of the fathers in this regard, for it was the fathers who trained their sons to sing. Too often Christian training in the home is left to mothers, but that is not the lesson taught by the example of these Levitical families’ (A FAMILY TREE – 1 CHRONICLES SIMPLY EXPLAINED; page 195).

We sing in our worship to *give thanks and to praise the LORD* (3). **Singing is important and we must be sure that the words of our hymns and songs are biblical:** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord* (Colossians 3:16).

According to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded

This chapter has the genealogy of the Levites, four distinct Levite family groups are recorded, those of Gershon, of Kohath, of Merari and of Aaron (16–53). Particular emphasis is given to Aaron and his descendants from whom the high priests were appointed *according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded* (49).

Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu *offered profane fire before the LORD* and he destroyed them with fire (Leviticus 10:1–3). The family line is traced through their younger brother, Eleazar, who with his descendants served as high priests (3–15; 49–53). It is pointed out that *Azariah ministered as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem* (10). Eli, whose high priesthood was marked by failure, is not included in the list (cp. 1 Samuel 2:22–36). Urijah, who erected a pagan altar in the temple is also omitted (cp. 2 Kings 16:10–16). Andrew Stewart comments, ‘Unfaithfulness among spiritual leaders is an especially serious sin with many hurtful consequences for God’s people, and we are reminded that God expects exemplary conduct from those who are in positions of leadership (A FAMILY TREE, page 50).

The Levites were to preserve true worship and guard the truth. Their lives were wholly devoted to serve God, some serving in the temple (9:17–34), others teaching the people the Word of God. They were not given a territory of the promised land in which to live, but were allocated cities throughout Israel (54–81). They were supported by the people (Hebrews 7:5) and were allocated portions of the sacrifices and offerings (eg. Leviticus 7:28–38). The Levitical priesthood foreshadowed the far superior priesthood of the Lord Jesus whose great sacrifice has put an end to the need for any animal sacrifices. We have a perfect High Priest who died and rose from the dead to save us from our sins. He loves us: ***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*** (Hebrews 4:14–16).

We are not covering the genealogies found in chapters 6 to 9

All the valiant men arose

The genealogies of the tribes of Israel not listed earlier are found in chapter 7 with the family tree of King Saul in chapter 8 and 9:35–44. The main subject covered in 1 Chronicles is the reign of David over Israel. This chapter records the tragic end of Israel's first king and his sons on Mount Gilboa. The Israelites were routed in battle and David lost his brave, noble and great-hearted friend Jonathan (1–2). Saul was a great soldier whose reign began with much promise. He enjoyed victories over the Ammonites and the Philistines, but he later disobeyed God. His disobedience had terrible consequences not only for himself, but for his family and for Israel. Our sin is never a private matter; it affects others! If we are disobeying the Lord, we will not walk in unity with our fellow church members and the work of the gospel will be hindered.

Saul knew he was so severely wounded that he would not escape death at the hand of the Philistines. Rather than let this happen, he told his armour-bearer to kill him, but the man was too afraid to do such a thing and Saul took his own life by falling on his sword (3–5). The Philistine victors found the bodies of Saul and his sons when they came to strip the slain the following day. They cut off Saul's head and fastened it in the temple of their god Dagon where they also placed Saul's armour. There would have been much rejoicing among the Philistines but they did not realise that Saul's death would make way, in God's purposes, for David, who would defeat them and break their grip on Israel (14:8–17).

The people of Jabesh-Gilead had never forgotten the kindness of Saul to them (see 1 Samuel chapter 11). When they heard of his death, *all the valiant men* of the city arose and travelled through the night to recover the bodies of Saul and his sons that they should be given an honourable burial in Jabesh (11–12). They were prepared to risk their lives on a very dangerous mission. **Do you have like qualities of faithfulness, fearlessness and self-sacrifice? They will be needed some day in the work of the Lord.**

Their duty was to help ... in the service of the house of the LORD

David proclaimed Solomon as king after his eldest surviving son, Adonijah had attempted to seize the throne (1; cp. 1 Kings chapter 1). He not only prepared for the building of the temple but also for its functioning and the worship in it. We shall not be reading all the way through the next five chapters which contain lists of Levites and priests, army commanders, leaders of tribes and state officials:

1. The twenty-four divisions of the Levites – 23:3–32
2. The twenty-four divisions of the priests – 24:1–19
3. Other Levites – 24:20–31
4. Twenty-four divisions of musicians & singers 25:1–31
5. The gate-keepers – 26:1–19
6. The treasuries and other responsibilities – 26:20–32
7. The twelve army divisions & their commanders 27:1–15
8. The tribes and their leaders – 27:16–24
9. State officials and their responsibilities – 27:25–34

Some of the duties of the Levites would be no longer necessary now that the ark of the covenant was in Jerusalem (25–26). The priests were organised into 'divisions' to take turn in ministering at the altar, a practice still found in the New Testament era (24:1; cp. Luke 1:5). The priests were only taken from the descendants of Aaron (24:1) but the other Levites had a vital role in serving God: *Their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD* (28). God may not have called you to be a preacher or a leader in the church, but every church member should be a helper. There is ample scope for service in a variety of ways. *'Helps'* are among spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28. **How are you helping in the service of your church?**

*There's a work for Jesus ready at your hand,
'Tis a task the Master just for you has planned.
Haste to do his bidding, yield him service true;
There's a work for Jesus none but you can do.*

(Elsie D. Yale)

Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God

David's charge to Solomon was full of encouragement; he wanted Solomon to know that the Lord would be with him and would prosper him in building the temple. He wanted the Lord to give him and give him wisdom and understanding. Solomon was to pray for wisdom and knowledge after the death of David (2 Chronicles 1:9–12). David told his son that he would prosper if he took care to obey the law of God and observe the commands that Moses had given to Israel (11–13). Though Solomon built the temple, he did not keep the charge to obey God's Word. His unfaithfulness to the Lord blighted his own life and that of the nation (1 Kings 11:1–13).

David had taken much care to prepare and provide the gold, silver, bronze and building materials for the house of the Lord (14). Solomon had a daunting task but he was to be strong and courageous and he was not to fear nor be discouraged (13). David urged him, '*Arise and begin working, and the LORD be with you*' (16).

Work without prayer is futile. David commanded the leaders of Israel, '*Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God*' (19). Most churches urgently need workers. Is God calling you to some work in your church? You must not rush into any service for the Lord without waiting upon him in prayer. You must also listen to advice from your pastor or other church leaders, but perhaps the time has come for you to arise and to begin working? When we set our hearts upon something we put much effort and energy into obtaining what we want.

Do you call upon God to help you in all your work for him? Do you earnestly seek the Lord in prayer each day for the salvation of loved-ones and friends?

*Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.* (William Cowper)

Unfaithfulness

We are repeating yesterday's reading of this chapter which is similar to 1 Samuel 31 but is different in that it also gives us the reason why Saul lost his life and his kingdom. *So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance* (13). Moses reminded the Israelites before they entered the promised land, that great privileges bring great responsibilities. God had set his love upon them and they must be faithful to him and obey his commandments. Moses warned them that if they were unfaithful, God would bring disaster upon them (Deuteronomy 7:3–11; 28:15–68).

Unfaithfulness is a very serious sin in the sight of the Lord. The half-tribe of Manasseh who lived on the east of the Jordan river are mentioned for their unfaithfulness to God. They turned to idolatry and the Lord brought judgment upon them (5:23–26). The same was true of the southern kingdom of Judah which *was carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness* (9:1).

We may not be tempted in the same way as Saul or the tribes of Israel, but it is all too easy for us to drift away from the Lord and become unfaithful to him. How does unfaithfulness begin in the life of a believer?

- We may begin to set our affections on earthly things and fall into the idolatry of loving the world (Deuteronomy 31:20; 32:15; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17).
- The fear of men may drive us to disobey God. This was true in the case of King Saul (1 Samuel 15:24). The greatest antidote to the fear of man is to fear the Lord and to trust in him (Psalm 34:9; Prov. 29:25).
- We may become careless, neglecting private prayer, Bible reading and attendance at the prayer meetings of the church (Hebrews 10:25).

Are you drifting into unfaithfulness? Be warned by what happened to Israel and to Saul. Ask the Lord to forgive you and to restore to you the joy of your salvation, and be determined to discipline yourself.

David ... became great, and the LORD of hosts was with him

David reigned over his own tribe of Judah for seven years and six months and the events of those years are passed over in 1 Chronicles (see 2 Samuel chapters 2 to 4). Verses 1 to 9 are almost identical to 2 Samuel 5:1–10. David eventually became king of the whole of Israel by popular acclaim (1–3; cp. 2 Samuel 2:10–11).

The leaders of the other tribes acknowledged their common descent with David, and that he had led Israel into battle when Saul was king (1–2). They recognised that God had chosen David, a shepherd, to be the shepherd-king of Israel (2; cp. Psalm 78:70–72). David had many faults which the Bible does not hide, but he did remain faithful to God and encouraged the people to worship the Lord; he never turned aside to idol worship. We have a far greater shepherd-king, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:1–30) and he will never fail us nor forsake us.

*The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine for ever.*

*And so through all my length of days,
Thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within thy house for ever!*

(Henry W. Baker)

David wanted Jerusalem as his capital city, but it was still occupied by the Jebusites. They felt so secure in their well-fortified stronghold that they imagined that even the blind and the lame could successfully defend it (5; cp. 2 Samuel 5:6). David conquered Jerusalem which also became known as 'Zion' and 'the City of David' (5,7). — *Then David went on and became great, and the LORD of hosts was with him* (9). The Lord's presence with him made all the difference! We must always remember to depend upon God and to trust in him at all times. **When God is with us, what have we to fear (Hebrews 13:5–6)?**

So David made abundant preparations before his death

David purchased the threshing-floor of Ornan and built an altar of burnt offering as God had commanded him. He then offered sacrifices and called upon the Lord who answered him by fire and commanded the angel to sheath his sword (21:18,25–27). David proclaimed that this new altar would replace the one situated at Gibeon (1; cp. 21:29–30). The temple was later built on this very site (2 Chronicles 3:1).

God denied David his earnest desire to build the temple because he had been a man of war and had shed much blood (8–10). Solomon was to build the temple but David energetically prepared the way for his son. *So David made abundant preparations before his death* (5). He used foreigners living in Israel to gather materials for the building. He organised skilled men to cut the stones for the temple and gathered an abundance of materials. (2–4; cp. 2 Chronicles 2:17–18). He wanted the very best for God, being determined that the temple would *be exceedingly magnificent* (5). David knew that he would never live to see this wonderful building, but his work of preparation was essential.

We must never think that our work for the Lord is completed, especially with the onset of our latter years. We need to have an eye to the future like David and persevere in the face of difficulties and discouragement. We should also encourage those who are younger to follow the Lord and to remain true to his Word. We must seek to wisely guide the young men who will become pastors and leaders in our churches.

Satan has his spoilers and wreckers and is always seeking to hinder and harm those churches who are seeking to honour God. If we love the Lord, his work should be very much on our hearts. We will pray much and labour much for our own church, for missionary work and for other Christian concerns. Many Christians are being much persecuted for the sake of Christ throughout the world; they too need our prayers and practical support.

I will not ... offer ... with that which costs me nothing

The Lord sent Gad, the seer, with a message for David telling him that he would be punished for his sin. He must choose either three years of famine, three months of defeat by the sword of his enemies, or three days of plague in the land at the hand of the angel of the Lord. A very distressed David chose punishment at the hand of God, acknowledging that the mercies of the Lord are very great (9–13). We must remember that though God freely forgives us when we repent of our sin, he does chastise us when we go astray (1 Corinthians 11:29–32; Hebrews 12:5–11).

The Lord sent a plague upon Israel in which seventy thousand men died. The angel was at the threshing floor of Ornan when God told him to stop his work of destruction. David and his elders were clothed in sackcloth as a sign of their sorrow over David's sin. They witnessed the terrifying sight of the angel of the Lord poised over Jerusalem with his outstretched sword and they fell on their faces (14–16). David's love for his people is shown in his acute anguish because Israel had suffered on account of his sin (17).

The angel of the Lord gave Gad a message for David. He was to erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing-floor of Ornan (18). David wished to purchase the threshing-floor, but Ornan refused any payment and freely offered David wood and animals for the sacrifices (22–23). David insisted on paying him, saying, *'I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing'* (24–25). God accepted David's offerings and the angel sheathed his sword (26–27).

There is a great challenge for us here. The Lord Jesus loves us and gave himself to save us from our sins! We often forget that we are no longer our own. We have been bought at a price and Jesus is worthy of our heartfelt devotion and service (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). **Are we offering to God something that costs us nothing? Are we giving him only our second-best which is not acceptable?**

Men who have put their lives in jeopardy

David's mighty men were drawn from various parts of Israel and some were Gentiles (eg. Zelek the Ammonite and Uriah the Hittite – 39, 41). Of the first three mighty men, only two are named here, Jashobeam and Eleazar (11–12). The heroism of the other, Shammah, is recorded in 2 Samuel 23:11–12. Their exploits listed in these verses have a number of lessons and challenges for us. We need to have the virtues that they displayed in our lives. What are these things?

- **Courage** – Jashobeam and Abishai fought and gained victory in seemingly impossible situations (11, 20–21). Eleazar refused to retreat in the face of great personal danger, and defended the barley-field that was ready to be harvested. God gave a great victory (12–14; 2 Samuel 23:9–10). There is a greater need than ever for men and women of courage in the church. We must stand firm for truth and holiness in these wicked and confusing times.

- **Sacrificial service** – Three mighty men *put their lives in jeopardy* for their king (15–19). They had such a loyalty to David that they disregarded personal safety. He was greatly moved by their devotion and he would not drink the water that they had brought from Bethlehem but poured it out to the Lord as a sacrificial drink offering. The Jehovah's Witnesses use David's words in verse 19 as a proof text against blood transfusions. It has nothing whatever to do with such a thing!

- **Strength** – Benaiah overcame immensely strong men and a lion (22–25). We may not attain to physical strength, but we can be strong in the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1).

The Lord Jesus gave his life to die in terrible agony to save us from our sins. He is worthy of our total devotion and loyalty. The Christian message is despised and rejected by many and there are pressures to compromise. We must remain faithful to the Lord and hold to the truths of his Word if we are to please him and be useful in his work. Think about the virtues of David's mighty men and prayerfully seek the grace of God to show them in your life.

A great army, like the army of God

This chapter describes the fighting men whom David gathered around him when he was a fugitive from Saul (1–22) and those who came to acclaim him as king over all Israel (23–40). The lesson of today's reading is that God is very gracious to us even when our faith is at a low ebb. David failed to trust in the Lord when he sought refuge among the Philistines. This lapse brought him into embarrassing and difficult situations (1 Samuel, chapters 27 and 29). The Philistine king of Gath gave David the city of Ziklag where he built up a strong and disciplined army.

Men from other tribes of Israel joined David, including soldiers from Saul's own tribe of Benjamin (1–7). The Gadites lived on the east of the River Jordan and those who joined David were *mighty men of valour, men trained for battle* (8). They were so determined to follow David that they crossed the Jordan when it was in full flood (15). *'The stronghold'* (8,16) probably refers to the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1–4) and it would indicate that the Gadites and those of Benjamin and Judah had joined David at an earlier period than the men mentioned in verses 1 to 7 and 19 to 22. Valiant soldiers from Manasseh also joined David at Ziklag to form *a great army, like the army of God* (22).

We live in perilous times when many who profess to be evangelical have embraced all kinds of error, especially those in the extreme charismatic movement. Precious biblical truths are being compromised or discarded, but we must remain faithful. **Are you discouraged or struggling? Look to the Lord and pray that he will send friends and helpers of the calibre of those he sent to David.** Pray that God will bless his church and raise up a great army to serve him and prepare yourself to be used in that army.

*Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armour on
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through his eternal Son.* (Charles Wesley)

God was displeased with this thing; therefore he struck Israel

The Lord sanctioned census-taking in Israel for those twenty years of age and above. Those numbered were required to give an offering of half a shekel to the Lord (Exodus 30:11–16). When David took a census of Israel, however, it displeased the Lord and was very sinful (7–8). We are not told why it was wrong for David to take the census on this occasion, but we should bear the following things in mind:

- There was the activity of Satan who moved David to number the people (1). The devil fell through pride (1 Timothy 3:6) and he uses pride to ensnare many believers. David may have been motivated by a desire to boast of his military might (5).
- There is no record that the half-shekel was offered by each of those who were recorded in the census.

Job was not a spiritual man but he warned David against this futile exercise which would bring guilt upon the nation (2). David would not listen to him and the census was taken but *God was displeased with this thing; therefore he struck Israel* (3–7). David then realised the folly of his action and was convicted of his sin. He made no excuses and readily confessed his own responsibility for the sin as he sought God's forgiveness (8).

When someone is bent on a course of disobedience to God, they will shut their ears to sense and reason. Has Satan been whispering in your mind, tempting you to a wrong course of action? Are you refusing to heed sound spiritual advice? Oh, do not be foolish like David was on this occasion! Come to the Lord and ask him to give you grace and strength to help you overcome the wiles of the devil.

*O give me, Lord, the tender heart
That trembles at the approach of sin;
A godly fear of sin impart,
Implant and root it deep within,
That I may dread thy gracious power
And never dare to offend thee more.* (Charles Wesley)

And they were subdued

The first three verses of this chapter cover the same period as 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12. David then remained in Jerusalem while Joab led his army against the Ammonites. The sordid history of his adultery with Bathsheba and its tragic consequences are passed over, however. The writer of Chronicles focuses our attention on the religious life of the nation and David's preparation for the building of the temple by Solomon. The solemn lesson of 2 Samuel chapter 11 is that when David opted out of the battle, he fell into sin. The devil finds more opportunity to tempt and to ensnare us when we are idle.

The victories over the Philistine giants (4–8) are also given in more detail in 2 Samuel 21:15–22. David had killed one giant in his youth, but other Philistine warriors were killed, including Goliath's brother: *And they were subdued* (4). We will always have battles in the Christian life (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10–18; 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3–4). We may enjoy great victories but we must never become complacent! We need each other in the Christian warfare just as David needed his brave warriors.

Do not isolate yourself from your fellow-believers. They need your help and encouragement in the Christian warfare and you need them. Be determined to be at the prayer meetings of your church where you will learn about the needs of your fellow church members, of missionaries, and of other churches. Prayer is vital if we are to be strong in the Lord and if the work of God is to prosper. The great apostle Paul needed the prayers and fellowship of other Christians (eg Ephesians 6:18–20; 2 Timothy 1:16; 4:9) and so do you! Christian 'loners' make life very difficult for themselves.

*Oft in danger, oft in woe,
Onward, Christians, onward go;
Bear the toil, maintain the strife,
Strengthened with the bread of life.*

(Henry K. White)

Stout-hearted men who could keep ranks

David was king only of Judah for the first seven and a half years of his reign (2 Samuel 2:11). The description of the army divisions who came to acclaim David as king over all Israel shows that they were a highly skilled fighting force. Let us ponder their strengths:

- Some are described as *mighty men of valour* (25,28,30). They were strong and courageous! The church needs men and women who are strong in the Lord and who have the courage to stand firm in the Christian warfare (Ephesians 6:10–13).
- Those from the tribe of Issachar *had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do* (32). They had discernment! We must equip ourselves with a thorough knowledge of Scripture if we would be discerning. There is much confusion in our churches but those who have understanding and discernment will not be deceived by false teachers. Whenever you hear any new or strange doctrine, you should instinctively ask, 'Where does it teach that in the Bible?'
- Many are noted for their ability to *keep ranks* or '*battle formation*' (33–36,38). This is an indication of order and discipline! The church is weakened by Christians who lead undisciplined lives. They delight in 'doing their own thing' and cannot work with other Christians. They leave little of lasting worth behind them. Others refuse to join the ranks of church membership when they have so much to offer to the Lord. They find all manner of excuses for their refusal to be involved in the work of good, biblical churches and God's work suffers. They seemingly forget they will have to give account to Christ on the day of judgment (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:9–10).

If you are guilty of lack of discipline or commitment, take stock of your life and ask the Lord to forgive you and help you. Make every effort to discipline your life and you will then enjoy the blessing of the Lord and you will be a blessing to others.

The anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah

David made Jerusalem his capital and he was eager to establish the city as the centre for the worship of God in the nation. He erected a tabernacle there for the ark of the covenant (15:1). The ark symbolised the presence of the living God among his covenant people and its capture by the Philistines in past history had been a national disaster (1 Samuel 4:5–7,11,21–22). The Lord had visited the Philistines with judgment and after seven months they returned the ark to Israel (1 Samuel 5:1 to 7:1); it had been kept at the house of Abinadab since the time of Samuel's leadership.

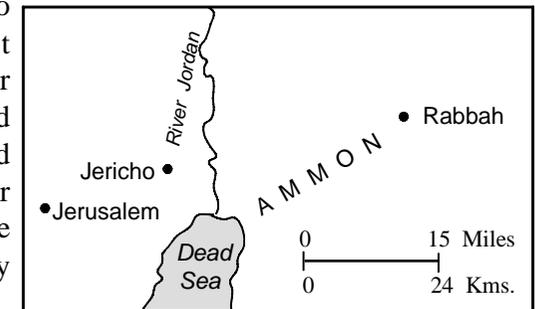
The return of the ark to Jerusalem should have been a joyful occasion but *the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah* when he put out his hand to steady the ark and God struck him dead (10). David became angry and the ark was left at the house of Obed-Edom (7–11). David had been sincere in his desire to please God so what had gone wrong? We read in 2 Samuel 6:7 that God struck down Uzzah *for his error* (the Hebrew word translated 'error' means 'rashness'; the NKJV margin has 'irreverence'). How had there been any rashness or irreverence?

- David, who usually sought God's direction did not do so in this important matter. Had he done so he would have been pointed to God's Word for the instructions on the moving of the ark: *'The LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult him about the proper order'* (15:13).
- The ark should have been carried by Levites, but David chose to follow the example of the spiritually ignorant Philistines who had used a new cart to transport the ark (7; cp. 1 Samuel 6:7–8).

What a warning there is for us here! We must prayerfully seek God's directions as laid down in his Word for all aspects of our church life. Many today, in their desire for results, have adopted worldly methods for evangelism and use entertainment in their worship because such things appear to work. **Philistine methods are not acceptable to God and any apparent blessing from such things is an illusion.**

I will show kindness ... because his father showed kindness to me

Nahash, the king of Ammon, had shown kindness at sometime in the past to David, possibly when he was a fugitive from Saul, who had defeated the Ammonites in his first battle as king over Israel (1 Samuel 11). On hearing of his death, David said, *'I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me'* (1–2). He sent messengers to convey his sympathy at this time of grief, but his kindness was spurned and his servants were humiliated (3–5). To make matters worse, the Ammonites, fearing reprisals, enlisted the help of the Syrians to prepare for battle against Israel. The Israelites, under the command of Joab and his brother, Abishai, gained a great victory. In a further battle, the Syrians were defeated, suffering heavy losses (6–19).



When we show kindness, we open ourselves to being hurt or misunderstood. Some people do not respond well to kindness and show little gratitude; this is a price that we must be prepared to pay. Another aspect of David's kindness is seen in his treatment of his humiliated servants. Had they returned to Jerusalem they would have been a laughing-stock with their half-beards. David told them to remain in Jericho until their beards had grown (5).

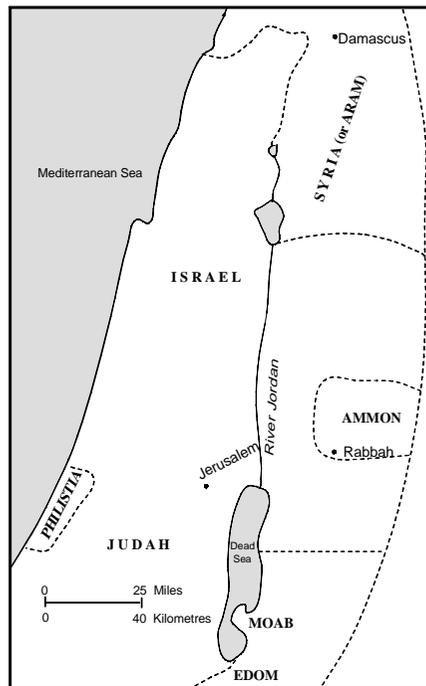
To be kind is to be considerate and thoughtful. Kindness is not only shown in acts of compassion and mercy, but in a refusal to slight others in conversation. If we are kind, we would not think of enjoying a joke at the expense of another person and we will shun all forms of rudeness. *Love suffers long and is kind ... does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked* (1 Corinthians 13:4–5).

The LORD preserved David wherever he went

This chapter lists some of David's conquests over Israel's neighbours. You may wonder what spiritual lessons we can glean from such a passage of Scripture. We saw from the previous chapter that David desired the glory of God by building him a house and that God honours those who put him first in their lives. The Philistines, a thorn in the side of Israel for many years, were at last subdued (1).

We read, *the LORD preserved David wherever he went* (6,13). This was the story of David's life, and what a story it was! God preserved him in all kinds of danger (the Hebrew translated '*preserved*' is usually translated 'saved'). What a privilege it is to be a child of God! We can say, '*The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen!*' (2 Timothy 4:18). What have we to fear when the almighty, sovereign God preserves us? He will keep us in all our trials and difficulties and we know that those who are saved cannot be lost.

How did David respond to the goodness of God? He dedicated the spoils of his battles to the Lord, as well as the gifts given to him by the king of Hamath (9–11). Many of these things were to be used by Solomon in the furnishing of the temple (8). David also glorified God in administering judgment and justice to all his people (14). **How do you respond to the goodness of God in your life? Do you joyfully give your time, gifts and money to the Lord?**

*And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom*

Obed-Edom is one of the lesser-known figures in the Bible but we have much to learn from him. Those belonging to the Philistine city of Gath were known as Gittites (cp. 20:5–6), but Obed-Edom was no Philistine. He was a Levite, probably from the Levitical city of Gath-Rimmon (15:17–18,24; cp. Joshua 21:24–25). His name means 'servant of Edom' which implies that at some time, he or perhaps his father, had been enslaved by the Edomites.

The death of Uzzah made the Israelites realise that they must not trifle with holy things. In his anger and fear, David had the ark left in the house of Obed-Edom (11–14). The presence of the ark had brought judgment to the Philistines and now Uzzah had been slain but it brought blessing to Obed-Edom. He accepted the ark into his home and would have kept it in a room of its own. He saw this as an unexpected opportunity to serve God and he rose to the challenge: *And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had* (13–14). Obed-Edom's and his sons were later chosen to guard the four gates of the temple (26:1–19). This was a very important work, protecting the temple from intruders and defilement; it was quietly done, requiring watchfulness and humility (cp. Psalm 84:10).

God's blessing is knowing his smile on our lives, his peace guarding our hearts and his presence surrounding us as we serve him. **Christian are you taking up the opportunities that God gives you to serve him?**

*How blest is life if lived for thee,
My loving Saviour and my Lord;
No pleasures that the world can give
Such perfect gladness can afford.*

*All day to walk beneath thy smile,
Watching thine eye to guide me still,
To rest at night beneath thy care,
Guarded by thee from every ill.*

(Prust's Supplementary Hymn Book 1869)

David enquired of God

David recognised that *the LORD had established him as king over Israel* and He had the help of Hiram, king of Tyre in the construction of his palace (1–2). When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed as king over all Israel, they marched against him, seeking his downfall, before he could establish his reign (8–17). *David enquired of God* to know if he should fight the Philistines and to know if God would give him success. The Lord told him to go up against them promising to give him victory (10). The enemy were in such disarray in defeat that they abandoned their gods which David ordered to be destroyed (11–12). God had mightily displayed his power in giving the Israelites victory and David named the place, Baal Perazim which means, ‘Lord of breaking through’.

The Philistines again raided the same valley and *David enquired again of God* and the Philistines were again defeated (13–17). Do you seek the Lord for guidance in your decision-making? Do you readily submit to his will in your life?

David followed the practice of other kings, having several wives and concubines (3; cp 2 Samuel 5:13; cp. 3:2–5). He did not need to enquire of the Lord concerning God’s will for marriage. He would have known the Lord’s command that kings must not multiply wives for themselves (Deuteronomy 17:17), yet he did just that. David appeared to have a ‘blind spot’ in this matter and the rivalries between the half-brothers born of these marriages were to bring great trouble and distress, tearing his family apart.

We ignore God’s Word at our peril! **Where God’s Word is plain, we do not need to pray for guidance;** for example, a believer must not marry an unbeliever and it is foolish and perverse for any professing Christian to engage in a courtship with someone who is not a Christian. We must shun any course of action which is questionable. God does not honour disobedience! Our motto should always be, ‘If in doubt, don’t.’ If we love the Lord, we will seek to honour him in our lives.

O LORD, there is none like you

David accepted God’s will which denied him the privilege of building the temple. When we accept our disappointments and trust in God’s sovereign goodness and wisdom, we are truly blessed! David sat before the Lord and poured out his heart in worship and thanksgiving. David’s prayer teaches us how we should approach God:

- We must come to God in a humble frame of mind. – ‘*Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that you have brought me this far?*’ (16). David was filled with a sense of wonder for all that the Lord had done for him. We are insignificant, yet God is mindful of us and gracious to us (cp. Psalm 8:3–8).
- We should come to God with gratitude for all his mercies to us. David was so overwhelmed with the goodness of God to him, that he was almost lost for words to express his feelings. – ‘*What more can David say to you for honouring your servant?*’ (17–19).
- Worship involves adoration of God. – ‘*O LORD, there is none like you, nor is there any God besides you*’ (20–22). The Lord Jehovah is a great God who does great things for his people! Is it any wonder that we love him and adore him?
- We must come to God with a submissive spirit. – ‘*Let it be established forever, and do as you have said*’ (23).
- We should seek the glory of God. – ‘*So let it be established, that your name may be magnified forever*’ (24). David was not seeking the blessing of God for his own selfish ends, but that God’s name may be glorified.
- We must trust in the promises of God’s Word (25–27). David believed God’s Word and he humbly asked the Lord to fulfil it.

Our prayers are often dull compared with those of the great men and women in the Bible. **Let us be more thoughtful and biblical when we approach God so that our prayer life will be enriched.**

The prayers in ‘The Valley of Vision’ (published by Banner of Truth) are a very helpful guide for the enriching our prayers.

The LORD will build you a house

When everything is going well for us, it is easy to forget God and become lukewarm in heart (cp. Revelation 3:15–17). David was different! He had established his kingdom but he was concerned that God be worshipped in a proper building rather than the tabernacle (a tent – 1; cp. 2 Samuel 7:1–2). He may have remembered the Lord's instructions to the Israelites before they crossed into the promised land. They were then told that they should have a permanent place of worship in a fixed location once God had given them rest from their enemies (Deuteronomy 12:10–14).

The prophet Nathan encouraged David to fulfil his God-honouring desires (3). He gave this counsel in good faith, but the Lord had different plans, which he revealed to Nathan that night (3–14). God's will was not for David to build the temple, but that his son to do so (11–13). He told David that he was not to build the temple because he had been a man of war and had shed blood (22:8; 28:3).

There are times when we may earnestly desire to serve God in a particular way, but he blocks our plans (cp. Acts 16:6–7). Why does God do this to us? We do not always know, but it may be that our motives are wrong or that we do not have the necessary gifts for the work we desire to do. Our faith is sorely tried when there is no discernible reason for disappointment in God's work, but let us remember that the Lord has something better for us. David wanted to build a house for God (4) but he was promised, '*The LORD will build you a house*' (10,25). This was a house (a dynasty) which would last for ever (14), over which the Lord Jesus would reign (Luke 1:32–33). The glorious purposes of God in the salvation of sinners were centred in the holy Son of God whose human descent is traced from David.

Remember, God is in control of all our disappointments! If we put the Lord first in our lives, he will give us more than we could ever imagine (see Matthew 6:33). Are you seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

She despised him in her heart

When he heard of God's blessing on the house of Obed-Edom, David arranged for the ark of the covenant to be brought to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:12). He now made sure that the ark was transported in the proper manner (2,11–14). There was a great celebration with singing and instrumental music as the ark was brought to Jerusalem (16–28). David was so joyful that he *was whirling and playing music* as he *danced before the LORD with all his might* (29; cp. 2 Samuel 6:14).

David's joy when the ark was brought to Jerusalem was not shared by his wife, Michal. * She spoke to David in a sarcastic manner when he returned to bless his household (2 Samuel 6:20). She accused him of demeaning himself, perhaps because he was wearing a garment of fine linen on this great occasion rather than his royal robes. Michal was so different from her brother Jonathan who was David's best friend. He had encouraged David in the Lord (cp. 1 Samuel 23:16) but Michal scorned his zeal for the Lord *and she despised him in her heart* as she looked out from a window in the palace (29).

These verses are not a sanction for so-called 'dancing in the Spirit' which is common in many charismatic churches. Such things are often displays of exhibitionism rather than godly zeal. They are not sanctioned in New Testament worship any more than the animal sacrifices offered by David on this occasion (26). True zeal for the Lord leads to godly living and shining as lights in this dark world. There is nothing attractive about fanaticism and we must learn to distinguish between wildfire and a burning love and devotion to the Lord. **How is it with you? Are you living for Christ or are you cold in heart, despising those who are not ashamed to own their Lord?**

* When Saul was seeking the life of David, he took Michal and gave her in marriage to another man (1 Samuel 25:44). She may have been bitter and resentful that when David became king, he had forcibly taken her back from her second husband who was devoted to her (2 Samuel 3:14–16).

Remember his covenant always

The ark of the covenant was placed in the tabernacle that David had prepared for it, and burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered to God. David *blessed the people in the name of the LORD* and distributed food to all present (1–3). He wrote a psalm which he gave to Asaph and the singers, to thank the Lord (7). Verses 8 to 22 are almost identical to Psalm 105:1–15; verses 23 to 33 are similar to Psalm 96; Verses 34 to 36 are found in Psalm 106:1, 47–48.

The wondrous works of the covenant God are emphasised in verses 8 to 22. The psalm urges us, ‘*Give thanks to the LORD! Call upon his name. Make known his deeds ... sing to him ... Talk of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name*’ (the name of God speaks of his character). We are to rejoice in him and seek him (8–11). We are not only to *remember his marvellous works* (12) but also to *remember his covenant always* (15). A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more persons, bringing them into a special relationship and commitment to each other. God made such a covenant with Abraham (16; cp. Genesis chapter 15) and he dealt with Israel on the basis of this covenant. He gave the Israelites the land of Canaan and he protected them (18–22).

Christians are brought into a special relationship with God through the new covenant in the blood of Christ (Hebrews 12:24). We are reminded of this covenant at the communion service (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). We remember the marvellous work of God in giving his Son to die for us. Let us think about all that the Lord has done for us and give thanks to him and sing our joyful psalms and hymns to magnify him. **When we remember God’s covenant always, we will be motivated to seek to please the Lord who loves us and to serve him with gladness.**

*God of the covenant, Triune Jehovah,
Marvels of mercy adoring we see;
Seeker of souls, in the counsels eternal
Binding thy lost ones for ever to thee.* (Jessie F. Webb)

Proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day

The devil has deceived millions into believing that to worship and to serve the Lord will somehow make us miserable. This psalm of David shows that there could be nothing further from the truth! The note of overflowing joy is sounded again and again and David calls on the heavens, the earth and all nature to rejoice before the Lord (31–33). Some people are so in love with their sin that they cannot imagine any happiness without it! True holiness is beautiful, wonderful and joyful. *Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!* (29).

This is a great missionary psalm which encourages us to spread the message of the gospel throughout the world. The tragedy of Israel of old was that with few exceptions, they had little desire to do this. We are urged to:

- *Proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day* (23).
- *Declare his glory among the nations, his wonders among all peoples* (24).
- Proclaim the greatness of God and the futility of idols. God is great and is to be greatly praised and feared (25–27).
- *Say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns’* (31). We must never lose sight of God’s sovereignty over all the universe. Evil appears to be winning the day in an increasingly godless world but God will have the final word. He reigns!
- Proclaim the Lord as the righteous Judge who will come to judge all people (33).

The chapter closes with a brief description of worship at the tabernacle. Notice that Obed-Edom and members of his family were appointed to be gatekeepers at the tabernacle (38). David returned from the celebrations to bless his house (43). This may mean that he pronounced a blessing on his household. It could also mean that he returned from worship to be a blessing to his family.

When did you last share the good news of God’s salvation with someone who is not a Christian?