

2 Chronicles Chapter 31

2 Chronicles 31:1 "Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities."

“Judah and Benjamin ... Ephraim also and Manasseh”: The first two referred to the southern kingdom; the last two represented the northern kingdom. The Passover had been a real revival and they carried the conviction of it back to their homes to destroy all the idolatry. So the reign of idolatry ended, and the worship of God was restored. The people went home in hope of divine blessing and a future of peace and prosperity.

(See the note on Judges 3:6-7).

(In Chronicles Chapter 30), we finished with the Passover and the feasting, celebration and rejoicing which took place during those 14 days which ended with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

If we were speaking of the churches in our day, and something like this happened, we would say we had a revival. They had a revival also. They were back in fellowship with their LORD. The people were still enthusiastic and excited about what had taken place. Now they went out with zeal and cut down the groves, threw down the high places, and brake the images and altars to false gods. The children of Israel went back to their respective homes renewed in their fellowship with God.

Verses 2-19: “Courses of the priest and the Levites”: The priestly service had not been supported by the government during the reign of the wicked kings, so Hezekiah restored that support as God originally ordained it (compare 1 Chron. 24:1; 2 Chron. 8:12-14).

2 Chronicles 31:2 "And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD."

During the reign of evil kings, the “Priest and the Levites” had not been serving according to the instructions of God given by David (for priestly service, compare 1 Chron. 23:13); for other Levites (compare 1 Chron. 24:26-32). Again, Hezekiah sought to restore proper worship; this time through appointing the proper ministers.

For David’s original setting of the Levites” in their “courses” (see 1 Chron. Chapters 23 – 26).

We see Hezekiah restored the offices of the priests and the Levites, as it had been established by Moses.

2 Chronicles 31:3 "[He appointed] also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, [to wit], for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as [it is] written in the law of the LORD."

In giving a "portion of his substance", Hezekiah acted as King David had centuries before, when a united Israel had been focused on worshiping God (1 Chron. 29:3-4).

We know that Hezekiah gave thousands of animals to be used in the service of the LORD. The king tithed the same as everyone else. There was no want of animals for the daily sacrifices. Hezekiah gave them enough that they could carry on all of the prescribed burnt offerings with no difficulty. He wanted to keep the letter of the law.

2 Chronicles 31:4 "Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD."

What was assigned unto them by the law of God by tithes, firstfruits, etc.

"That they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord": In the study of it; that they might gain greater knowledge of it themselves, and be better able to instruct the people. Which of late had been much neglected. And that they might be more at leisure for such service. And be free from all worldly business, care and distraction of mind, which was the design of this edict.

The Levites lived of the offerings of the people. Hezekiah reminded them that 10% of everything they owned belonged to God. Hezekiah commanded the people to give their tithe to the priests and Levites. This way the Levites would have a living too.

2 Chronicles 31:5 "And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all [things] brought they in abundantly."

Not only was published in the city of Jerusalem, but the report of it, or rather that itself, was spread throughout the cities of Judah.

"The children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey": The three first of these are expressed in the law (Deut. 18:4). But not honey. Wherefore the Targum here, and the Jewish writers in general, interpret it of the "dubsa" of the palm tree, as they call it. But though honey was forbid to be used in sacrifice, it was not forbidden to be eaten. And as the land of Judea abounded with honey, properly so called, the priests might have the firstfruits of that as of other liquors (see note on Deut. 8:8).

"And of all the increase of the field": Of the trees of it, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, etc. as Kimchi.

"And the tithe of all things": Even of herbs, as the same writer, and so the Talmud, which were free from tithes by the law (see Matt. 23:23).

"Brought they in abundantly": Even of all that their vineyards, oliveyards, and fields produced.

They seemed to be pleased to bring of their substance to sustain the Levites. It was a privilege to give of their substance for renewed fellowship with God.

Verses 6-7: Revival is also characterized by a return to stewardship. Like so many practices under the evil kings, tithing had been neglected (Deut. 14:22-28). The people brought so much that the tithes were piled in "heaps". A failure to give to God is a mark of spiritual emptiness. To love Jesus, His Word, His people and His work yields an increasing desire to give abundantly.

2 Chronicles 31:6 "And [concerning] the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid [them] by heaps."

"Tithe": Since the priest and Levites served the nation, they were to be supported by the people through the taxation of the tithe. According to (Lev. 27:30-33; and Numbers 18:21 and 24), the people were to give the tenth (tithe), to supply all the needs of the Levites. (Malachi 3:8), says they were robbing God when they did not give the tithe. (Deut. 12:6-7), called for a second tithe that was to support the nation's devotion to the temple by being used for the national festivals at the temple in Jerusalem. This was called the festival tithe. (Deut. 14:28-29), called for a third tithe every 3 years for the poor. The sum of this tax plan totaled about 23 percent annually.

The verses before this one, spoke of those from Jerusalem, and what they gave. This was speaking of the entire land of Judah, and even into Israel. They all gave willingly. Holy things were probably speaking of offerings. The heaps showed there was an abundance of them.

2 Chronicles 31:7 "In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished [them] in the seventh month."

"Third ... seventh month": From the time of the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, in May/June until the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, in Sept./Oct.

This could be speaking of the grain that was harvested and brought in. The early harvest is about the third month, and the latter harvest is in the seventh month. This first time could be speaking of the end of the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. The seventh month harvest had to do with Feast of Trumpets, and then Tabernacles. At both times, there was much grain harvested.

2 Chronicles 31:8 "And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel."

Of the tithes and firstfruits.

"They blessed the Lord": For the great increase of the fruits of the earth, and for making the people so willing to bring in the dues to the priests and Levites.

"And his people Israel": Wished all happiness and prosperity to them, being found in the way of their duty.

The harvest was plentiful, because the LORD had blessed the people. Hezekiah first blessed the LORD for providing the harvest. Then he blessed the people for bringing their portion as a tithe.

2 Chronicles 31:9 "Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps."

How they came to be so large, or why they let them lie where they did.

Now that they had the grain, they had to figure out how to handle it. This was what was intended above.

2 Chronicles 31:10 "And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since [the people] began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left [is] this great store."

Who was the high priest of the family of Eleazar, in the line of Zadok, made high priest in Solomon's time, when Abiathar was thrust out. Jarchi takes him to be the same Azariah that was in the days of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:17).

"And said, since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty": Which were now four months since. And the priests and Levites, and their families, had partaken of them, and ate to being full, and yet there was great plenty remaining.

"For the Lord hath blessed his people": The Targum is, "the Word of the Lord has blessed them". Given them large crops this year, and a ready willing mind to bring in what is due for the service of the temple.

"And that which is left is this great store": The heaps the king and princes saw, and inquired about. Or what is left is for the great multitude of the priests and Levites, and their families. Both at Jerusalem, and in the cities in the country; so Kimchi interprets it.

There had been so much grain coming in, that there was more than the Levites could use. Now we see that Azariah was acting high priest in the temple. This tremendous abundance of grain would have to be taken care of. Hezekiah would possibly be the one, who decided what to do.

2 Chronicles 31:11 "Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared [them],"

“Chambers”: These were stone houses, granaries and cellars to replace the old decayed ones. In these places the Levites stored the tithes (verse 12).

These chambers would be for the sole purpose of the caring for of the grain.

2 Chronicles 31:12 "And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated [things] faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite [was] ruler, and Shimei his brother [was] the next."

Kept nothing back for their own private use, but faithfully delivered in and laid up the whole that was brought which remained. This was done by the priests and Levites, in whose hands and care they were.

"Over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next": These two had the charge and care of the whole, the one as deputy to the other.

It appeared that Cononiah had been put in charge of the offerings that had come in. His brother Shimei, was his helper. These two men had to be of high character to be trusted with the tithes.

There was so much of it, it would be a tremendous job to just keep it straight. I am sure that the High Priest and Hezekiah would ask for an accounting of how it had been distributed. We know for sure, the LORD would require an accounting. The word "faithfully" gives an indication these were honest men.

2 Chronicles 31:13 "And Jehiel, and Azariah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, [were] overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God."

These ten were assistants to the other two, were under them, and at their command, and were to be ready at hand to do what they should order and direct them.

"At the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God": These were fixed in their post under the other two by the king and the High Priest, to whom also the other two were accountable.

These were men, not so responsible for the accounting of the tithe, as they were the distribution. We know that the physical part of distributing this grain to the various families of the Levites would be a large undertaking.

2 Chronicles 31:14 "And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, [was] over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things."

At the east gate of the temple (see 1 Chron. 26:17).

"Was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord": To the priests and Levites, for whose use they were. Or to deliver out the fine flour, oil, and wine, and frankincense, for the meat and drink offerings.

"And the Most Holy Things": Which belonged to the priests only to eat of. As the remainder of the meat offerings, the sin and trespass offerings, and the showbread.

The freewill offerings of the LORD were shared with the family of the person who offered. This again, would be a task to divide fairly. This was not an offering of obligation. All offerings were taken to the temple and given. It was up to the one who was in authority in that particular area, to see that it was divided properly. All of these offerings remind me of the offerings taken to the church, and given to the LORD for use in His work. It is very important for the church to have honest people in charge of the receiving and distributing of the funds received by the church.

2 Chronicles 31:15 "And next him [were] Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in [their] set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small:"

As Kore was the principal, and his business lay chiefly with the priests in the temple, and in Jerusalem. These men under him were employed in distributing to the priests.

"In the cities of the priests": In the several parts of the country.

"In their set office": Or faithfully.

"To give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small": To communicate of the stores under their hands, according to their several courses. Both priests and Levites, and to all in their families, small and great.

2 Chronicles 31:16 "Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, [even] unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses;"

Their office was not only to give to the priests, but to those of their males in their genealogy, who were three years old and upwards. For under that age, according to Kimchi, they were not fit to come into the temple. Nor have they knowledge to keep what is put into their hands. Nor fit to handle offerings, lest they should defile them. But at that age they might be taught how to hold them, and be used to it. But as for females, he says, they were not admitted at any age.

"Even unto everyone that entereth into the house of the Lord": Of the said age, and in the genealogy and register of the priests.

"His daily portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses": Food for every day, in consideration of their service in their several wards, according to their courses in turn.

All of the Levites were to share in the offerings equally. It was necessary to have men who took care of this. If they did not, some would get too much and others nothing at all.

2 Chronicles 31:17 "Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;"

As to the priests registered according to their families from the age before observed, a portion was given. So to the Levites:

"From twenty years old and upward, in their charges, by their courses": For though originally they were not admitted into the tabernacle till twenty-five years of age, nor to officiate till thirty. But in David's time they were allowed at twenty years of age and upwards (1 Chron. 23:24; see notes on 1 Chron. 23:3; compare Num. 4:3; 28:24).

2 Chronicles 31:18 "And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:"

These were all registered by their genealogies. Wives and children, sons and daughters, whether small or grown up. And a portion was distributed to them according to their number, greater or lesser.

"For in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness": Which is to be understood either of the overseers, who, in their set office, faithfully distributed the holy things to the persons before described. Or else to the priests, and Levites, to whom, and to whose families, the distribution was made. Because they wholly devoted themselves to the holy service of God.

The verses above are explaining how they decided who needed what portion. The children and wives of the Levites lived of the gifts, as well as the Levites. The inheritance of the Levites was to share with the altar the things offered there-on.

2 Chronicles 31:19 "Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, [which were] in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites."

"Fields of the suburbs": This refers to the 48 Levitical cities (compare Joshua 21:1-42). The tithes-taxes collected from everyone were used not only for festivals at the temple, but also for regular daily support of the priests living and leading throughout the Land (see note on verse 6).

This is just explaining that even those who did not work in the temple, but had other duties, were cared for also. They were reckoned by the names of the father of each family of Levites.

Verses 20-21: Hezekiah thrived during his reign in Jerusalem. His secret: “that which was good and right and truth before the LORD”, and he did it “with all his heart”. His is an example of intensity and urgency (29:1-3), for believers everywhere: to follow what God has commanded with full devotion.

(See notes on 2 Kings 18:5-7).

2 Chronicles 31:20 "And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought [that which was] good and right and truth before the LORD his God."

Settled the courses of the priests and Levites, and made a provision for them and their families.

"And wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God": Or did that which was truly right and good, according to the law and will of God. In the sincerity and uprightness of his soul, and as in the presence of the omniscient God. He approving and accepting it for Christ's sake.

Hezekiah wanted to do everything God's way. He was a man after God's own heart. He was righteous in the sight of the LORD. His actions proved his faith in the LORD.

2 Chronicles 31:21 "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did [it] with all his heart, and prospered."

In cleansing the temple, providing sacrifices and placing the priests and Levites order. Taking care of the maintenance of them.

"And in the law and in the commandments": In the observation of all the laws, statutes, and judgments of God, including the moral, ceremonial, and judicial.

"To seek his God": And serve and worship him, and therein his honor and glory.

"He did it with all his heart": In the most cordial, sincere, and upright manner.

"And prospered": He succeeded in all he undertook. God being with him, and blessing him in his civil and religious concerns.

Hezekiah would receive tremendous blessings from God, because he kept God's commandments and law. He was careful to carry out his obligations in the house of the LORD as well. His heart was stayed upon God. We Christians should desire to do God's will in everything in our lives as well. A blessed life is a life stayed upon God.

2 Chronicles Chapter 31 Questions

1. When the 14 days of celebration and feast were over, what did the people do?
2. How could we compare what happened then, to a happening in our churches today?
3. Who appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites?
4. This had originally been established by whom?
5. The king's portion is speaking of what?
6. These large numbers of sacrificial animals, that Hezekiah had given, would be used for what?
7. What did Hezekiah command the people to do?
8. Who received their living of the offerings?
9. What percentage of what they owned belonged to God?
10. How did the people respond to Hezekiah's command to give their tithes?
11. Who, besides those in Jerusalem, brought an offering?
12. What were the heaps?
13. What did they decide to do with the abundant offerings?
14. Who was over the offerings and tithes?
15. Who was his assistant?
16. The men listed in verse 13, were involved in the _____.
17. Who was over the freewill offerings?
18. This was not an offering of _____.
19. Who received of the offerings and tithes, besides the priests?
20. How did Hezekiah serve the LORD?