

1 Chronicles Chapter 24

In verses 1-31 the divisions and duties of the priests are outlined.

Temple worship was carefully structured, without hindering the Holy Spirit or true worship (1 Cor. 14:40).

Verses 1-19

God selected the “sons of Aaron,” to serve as priests (Lev. Chapters 8 and 9).

Two of these sons were put to death before producing heirs after using “profane fire” for the incense offering (Lev. 10:1).

1 Chronicles 24:1 "Now [these are] the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar."

“Nadab and Abihu” (consult Lev. 10:1-3), for their disgrace and demise.

“Eleazar”:

The line of the high-priest would be through Eleazar’s offspring in accord with the priestly covenant made by God with Phinehas (Num. 25:11-13).

The first two sons of Aaron were Nadab and Abihu.

They were killed by the LORD, when they carried strange fire into the tabernacle.

This left Eleazar and Ithamar to carry on the work of the priests.

Since Nadab and Abihu had no children when they died, it would be up to the families of Eleazar and Ithamar to keep the priesthood going.

1 Chronicles 24:2 "But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office."

No mention is made here of the crime for which “Nadab and Abihu” forfeited their priesthood and were executed (see Lev. 10:1-5).

The high priestly prerogatives fell then upon “Eleazar and Ithamar” (see the note on 1 Sam. 2:31-36).

Their father Aaron, was not even allowed to grieve for them.

He had the anointing oil upon him when they died, and some other relatives had to come and take them out of the tabernacle.

Eleazar and Ithamar would be the priests under their father Aaron, who was high priest.

1 Chronicles 24:3 "And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service."

“Zadok” (see notes on 1 Chron. 6:8, 49-53).

“Ahimelech”:

This was the son of Abiathar whom Solomon released from his duties for siding with Adonijah (compare 1 Kings Chapters 1 and 2), and the grandson of another Ahimelech, who was a priest killed by Saul (1 Sam. 22:11-18).

(2 Sam. 8:17), confirms the Zadok and Ahimelech high-priestly combination, one at Jerusalem where the ark was kept and the other as Gibeon serving the tabernacle (see note on 1 Chron. 15:11).

Notice the close cooperation of these three influential people.

David and the priests “Zadok” and “Ahimelech”, as they worked together with a common goal: worshiping God.

All Christians should aspire to the same.

This appears that David, Zadok, and Ahimelech made the arrangements for the services in the work of the LORD.

Ahimelech and Zadok were both acting high priests at the time of David.

Ahimelech was the father of Abiathar.

David made Abiathar high priest, after Saul killed all of his brothers.

Verses 4-19

Priesthood duties were divided up in David’s day into 24 divisions, 16 of Eleazar and 8 of Ithamar.

The reasons Eleazar’s family had twice as many divisions were that:

- (1) He had received the birthright since his older brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had been killed (Lev. Chapter 10);

- (2) He had more descendants; and
- (3) His descendants had more leadership ability.

These divisions each served for either:

- (1) Two week periods annually or, more likely;
- (2) A one month period every two years (compare 27:1-15).

The divisions appear again (in Neh. 10:2-8; 12:1-7; 12:12-21).

These divisions extended even into the time of Christ (Luke 1:5-9).

The rest of the time they ministered to people in their own hometowns.

1 Chronicles 24:4 "And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and [thus] were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar [there were] sixteen chief men of the house of [their] fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers."

Because "Eleazar" had inherited the privileged status of firstborn, his line received double the amount of the priestly courses (verse 16), that were assigned to the line of "Ithamar" (verse 8).

The priests were thus "divided" into 24 groups (verses 7:19), which officiated at the worship services in turn, either one or two weeks at a time, twice a year (compare 2 Chron. 23:8).

There were 16 men of the sons of Eleazar, who were capable of leading.

There were just eight of the sons of Ithamar, who were leaders.

1 Chronicles 24:5 "Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors [of the house] of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar."

"Divided by lot":

The ancient method of discerning God's will (Prov. 16:33; Acts 1:26), was used to sort out all the duties, so that all cause for pride or jealousy was mitigated (compare verse 31; 26:13).

This book often mentions casting lots to determine issues such as work assignments (6:62; 25:8; 26:13).

Joshua used such a method to assign land to the tribes of Israel (Joshua 18:8).

Today, believers have no need to cast lots because God's Spirit lives within them, informing their ways (Rom. 8:26-28).

Of the children of Ithamar and of Eleazar, there was no order of importance, so the various tasks were decided by lot.

The sons of Eleazar are allotted the governorship of the sanctuary.

They would work under their father, Eleazar.

The house of God is possibly speaking of the Holy of Holies.

1 Chronicles 24:6 "And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, [one] of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and [before] the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and [one] taken for Ithamar."

The Targum is, Moses the chief scribe, so called.

"One of the Levites, wrote them":

The lots, and the names upon them, put into the urn, and as they came out, which was first, second, etc. And this was done:

"Before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites":

And in this public manner, before such great personages, and in the presence of those that were interested in the affair.

That it might appear plainly no fraudulent methods were taken, and that there might be no suspicion of any.

"One principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar":

The sense of Jarchi as above, and other Jewish writers, is, that one was added to each family of Eleazar, and so made sixteen.

And Ithamar's were retained, and left as at first, eight.

But the sense is, that first one family of Eleazar was taken, and then one of Ithamar's family, and then one of Eleazar's again, and so on until sixteen were gone through.

And then the other eight were divided under so many heads of the family of Eleazar.

The lots that were drawn were recorded by Shemaiah.

This is just saying, that the two high priests were eyewitnesses to the procedure.

There seemed to be two sets of names.

One was drawn for Eleazar, and one was drawn for Ithamar.

1 Chronicles 24:7-18

"Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,"

"The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,"

"The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,"

"The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,"

"The ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah,"

"The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,"

"The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,"

"The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,"

"The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses,"

"The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,"

"The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul,"

"The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah."

“Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib”:

Written thus only here and in (1 Chron. 9:10); elsewhere always Joiarib.

He then is the head of the first of the twenty four courses of priests in David's time, and according to his plan.

For the evidence of the return of some of this family from the Exile (see Neh. 11:10).

Though the text of this clause is very suspicious (Neh. 12:6, 19).

“Jedaiah”:

For the return of some of the descendants of this family (see Ezra 2:36; Neh. 7:39; compare Neh. 12:6-7, 19, 21).

And the other twenty three to the following persons in order: Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim, Malchijah, Mijamin, Hakkoz, Abijah, Jeshua, Shecaniah, Eliashib, Jakim, Huppah, Jeshebeab, Bilgah, Immer, Hezir, Apses, Pethahiah, Jehezkel, Jachin, Gamul, Delaiah, and Maaziah; of all which courses we know little more than their names, though they continued in some form or other both under the first and second temple, to the destruction of it.

The Jews say only four of these courses returned from the Babylonish captivity, which were those of Jedaiah, Harim, Pashur, and Immer; though Pashur is not among these here.

Yet they say each of these four had six lots, and that the names and the order of the other courses were retained and continued under them, and supplied by them.

Hence, we read of Mattithiah, from whom sprung the Maccabees, as of the course of Jehoiarib," In those days arose Mattathias the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib, from Jerusalem, and dwelt in Modein" (1 Maccabees 2:1).

Which was the first course, and the most honorable.

Wherefore Josephus, who was of it, valued himself upon it that he was not only of the priestly order, but of the first class or course of the twenty four.

And we also read of the course of Abijah, the eighth course, of which was Zechariah the father of John the Baptist.

“Abijah”:

The division of Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father (Luke 1:5).

The division of the priestly courses of the house of Aaron was reinstituted after the return from the Exile.

The father of John the Baptist served in his day as the representative of the course of “Abijah”.

1 Chronicles 24:19 "These [were] the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him."

Their classes or courses into which they were divided.

"In their service to come into the house of the LORD":

To perform their service in the temple, according to their turns, and in course as fixed by lot.

One class or course served one week, and then went out, and another came in, each consisting of 1000 men (see 1 Chron. 23:4).

"According to their manner":

Law, right, custom, here prescribed for them.

“Under Aaron their father”:

That is, him who was high priest for the time being.

Who bore this name because his successor and representative, under whose inspection, direction, and authority, all the rest of the priests were, and whom they were to obey in all things.

"As the LORD God of Israel had commanded him":

To take care they should be done.

Each priest served a week from the seventh day to the seventh.

The first lot taken served first, until it had gone through all 24, then the first one started, again.

Verses 20-31

These “priests” apparently served as assistants to the “sons of Aaron” and were likewise assigned their posts by lot.

This list of “the rest of the sons of Levi”, supplements the list of Levites found (in chapter 23).

The Levites acted as assistants to the sons of Aaron, took care of the physical temple, and continually helped lead worship to God.

1 Chronicles 24:20 "And the rest of the sons of Levi [were these]: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah."

Rather, and for the sons of Levi that were left over.

I.e., after the priests had been separately dealt with.

The list begins with the Kohathite heads, omitting the Gershonites (1 Chron. 23:7-11), perhaps owing to a missing portion in the chronicler’s manuscript authority.

"Of the sons of Amram; Shubael":

For the sons.

Shubael is a variant of “Shebuel” (1 Chron. 23:16).

The same variation recurs in (1 Chron. 25:4; 25:20).

Shebuel was grandson to Moses (1 Chron. 23:16).

Here the name represents a Levitical house or class, of which, in David's time Jehdeiah was the head.

The name "Jehdeiah" occurs again in (1 Chron. 26:30), and nowhere else in the Old Testament.

The rest of the sons of Amram and their descendants were not priests or high priests, but were to wait on the sons of Aaron.

Shubael was Moses grandson.

1 Chronicles 24:21 "Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first [was] Isshiah."

"Rehabiah":

This name marks the line of Moses, in the person of his younger son, Eliezer, father of Rehabiah.

And the practical result of these two verses is to give us the two "chiefs," or heads, or representatives, Jehdeiah and Isshiah, both Amramites.

Rehabiah was the grandson of Moses through his younger son Eliezer.

This verse and the one prior to it show Moses's line.

1 Chronicles 24:22 "Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath."

For the Izharites.

The Gentile form of this designation indicates that Shubael, Rehabiah, and others of these proper names, are likewise names of houses or clans.

"Shelomoth":

Is mentioned in (1 Chron. 23:18), but not the chief, "Jahath."

This jumps back up to Kohath's son, Izhar, Amram's brother.

1 Chronicles 24:23 "And the sons [of Hebron]; Jeriah [the first], Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth."

Neither "Hebron" nor "the first" is found in the present Hebrew text.

But they seem to have been rightly supplied by our translators from (1 Chron. 23:19).

The four persons named appear to have been contemporaries of David, the heads of the Hebronite houses in his time (compare 1 Chron. 26:31).

Hebron is yet another son of Kohath, and was also brother to Amram.

1 Chronicles 24:24-25

"[Of] the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir."

"The brother of Michah [was] Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah."

The sons of Uzziel ... of the sons of Michah":

With (1 Chron. 24:24-25, compare 1 Chron. 23:20).

"Jesiah" there is the same Hebrew name as is here spelt "Isshiah;" it should be Yishshîyah in both places.

"Isshiah":

This is the correct form; in (1 Chron. 23:20; A.V.) "Jesiah" is wrong.

Shamir and Zechariah are the heads of the bnê Micah and bnê Isshiah.

Only five heads of the nine Kohathite houses are mentioned, viz., Jehdeiah, Issliiah, Jahath, Shamir, and Zechariah.

Uzziel was another son of Kohath and brother of Amram.

This line leads to Zechariah, and Shamir.

1 Chronicles 24:26 "The sons of Merari [were] Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno."

(1 Chron. 24:26-30): the Merarite heads (compare 1 Chron. 23:21-23).

"The sons of Jaaziah; Beno":

Beno is the Hebrew for "his son," and can hardly be a proper name.

The clause should be connected immediately with what follows in (1 Chron. 24:27), and the whole translated thus: "The sons of Jaaziah his son.

That is, sons of Merari belonging to Jaaziah his sons were Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri."

Jaaziah appears as a third son of Merari, not mentioned elsewhere (see note on 1 Chron. 23:23).

If the Hebrew text is substantially sound, it is implied that there existed in the days of David a group of Merarite houses calling themselves “sons of Jaaziah.”

The construction here suggested involves the rejection of the conjunction before “Shoham” in (1 Chron. 24:27).

1 Chronicles 24:27 "The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri."

The sons of Jaaziah, Beno.

Beno is not really a name.

It is the Hebrew for "his son," and is to be attached to Jaaziah.

Translate (1 Chron. 24:27), "and the sons of Merari by Jaaziah his son (were) Shoham and Zaccur, and Ibri."

The meaning of the whole passage 1 Chron. 24:26-30 seems to be that there were three branches of the Merarites the Beni-Mahli, the Beni-Mushi, and the Beni-Jaaziah.

1 Chronicles 24:28 "Of Mahli [came] Eleazar, who had no sons."

Literally, To Mahli, Eleazar; and there became not to him sons (compare 1 Chron. 23:22).

The clan Eleazar did not branch out into new clans, but, being few in number, joined with that of Kish-Jerahmeel.

1 Chronicles 24:29 "Concerning Kish: the son of Kish [was] Jerahmeel."

Literally, To Kish, the sons of Kish, Jerahmeel.

The plural, “sons of Kish,” (as in 1 Chron. 23:22).

Merari was brother to Kohath.

Eleazar's daughters married Kish's sons.

These two houses were absorbed into one house in this, as the daughters of Eleazar took on the names of the sons of Kish.

Jerahmeel carried on their families.

1 Chronicles 24:30 "The sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These [were] the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers."

1 Chronicles 23:23, see notes there.

Only the names of the houses or classes are mentioned, without those of the chiefs (compare 1 Chron. 24:23).

"These were the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers":

Rather, according to their father houses (clans).

This subscription proves that the original of (1 Chron. 24:20-30), contained a complete catalogue of the Levitical houses or clans, exclusive of the Aaronites.

How far the apparent defects of the present Hebrew text reproduce those of its archetype, and how far they are due to errors of transcription, cannot now be decided.

Mushi was the grandson of Merari.

The others mentioned here, were descended from Mushi.

1 Chronicles 24:31 "These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren."

These, being divided into twenty four classes also, cast lots.

Which class should answer to, attend upon, and serve the first course of the priests, and which the second, and so on.

And this they did in the same solemn and public manner as the priests had done.

"In the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites" (as in 1 Chron. 24:6).

"Even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren":

The sense is, either that the one stood over against the other, to be distributed by lot, the one as well as the other.

Or they were chosen by lot, let it fall as it would, without any regard to age or dignity, to the seniority or largeness of houses and families.

But as they were chosen, be they younger or elder, richer or poorer.

Their families more or less numerous and ancient, so they took their places.

They cast lots in front of David and the two high priests to determine their position as well.

1 Chronicles Chapter 24 Questions

1. Who were the first two sons of Aaron?
2. What happened to them?
3. Did they have any descendants?
4. Who were the two sons of Aaron left to carry on the work of the priests?
5. Why could Aaron not grieve for his two sons that the LORD killed?
6. Who were Zadok and Ahimelech?
7. Who was Ahimelech's son?
8. When did David make him high priest?
9. How many chief men of Eleazar were there?
10. How many chief men of Ithamar were there?
11. How were they divided?
12. The lots were recorded by whom?
13. Who were eyewitnesses of the procedure?
14. Who is descended from Abijah?
15. Each priest served a _____ from the seventh day?
16. What was different about the other sons of Amram, who descended through Moses?
17. Rehabiah was the _____ of Moses.
18. Who was Izhar's brother?
19. Uzziel's line leads to _____ and _____.
20. Merari was brother of _____.
21. Who did Eleazar's daughters marry?

22. Mushi was the grandson of _____.