

CHAPTER 24

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the distribution of the priests and Levites into their respective classes, for the more regular discharge of the duties of their offices, according to their families.

- I. Of the priests (v. 1-19).
- II. Of the Levites (v. 20-31).

<1301>1 CHRONICLES 24:1-19

THE COURSES OF THE PRIESTS

The particular account of these establishments is of little use to us now; but, when Ezra published it, it was of great use to direct their church affairs after their return from captivity into the old channel again. The title of this record we have v. 1 — *These are the divisions of the sons of Aaron*, not by which they divided one from another, or were at variance one with another (it is a pity there should ever be any such divisions among the sons of Israel, but especially among the sons of Aaron), but the distribution of them in order to the dividing of their work among themselves; it was a division which God made, and was made for him.

1. This distribution was made for the more regular discharge of the duties of their office. God was, and still is, the God of order, and not of confusion, particularly in the things of his worship. Number without order is but a clog and an occasion of tumult; but when every one has, and knows, and keeps, his place and work, the more the better. In the mystical body, every member has its use, for the good of the whole, <5174>Romans 12:4, 5; <612>1 Corinthians 12:12.

2. It was made by lot, that the disposal thereof might be of the Lord, and so all quarrels and contentions might be prevented, and no man could be charged with partiality, nor could any say that they had wrong done them. As God is the God of order, so he is the God of peace. Solomon says of the lot that it *causeth contention to cease*.

3. The lot was cast publicly, and with great solemnity, in the presence of the king, princes, and priests, that there might be no room for any fraudulent practices or the suspicion of them. The lot is an appeal to God, and ought to be managed with corresponding reverence and sincerity. Matthias was chosen to the apostleship by lot, with prayer (~~402~~ Acts 1:24, 26), and I know not but it might be still used in faith in parallel cases, as an instituted ordinance. We have here the name of the public notary that was employed in writing the names, and drawing the lots, (v. 6): *Shemaiah, one of the Levites.*

4. What those priests were chosen to was to preside in the affairs of the sanctuary (v. 5), in their several courses and turns. That which was to be determined by the lot was only the precedency, not who should serve (for they chose all the chief men), but who should serve first, and who next, that every one might know his course, and attend in it. Of the twenty-four chief men of the priests sixteen were of the house of Eleazar and eight of Ithamar; for the house of Ithamar may well be supposed to have dwindled since the sentence passed on the family of Eli, who was of that house. The method of drawing the lots is intimated (v. 6), one chief household being taken for Eleazar, and one for Ithamar. The sixteen chief names of Eleazar were put in one urn, the eight for Ithamar in another, and they drew out of them alternately, as long as those for Ithamar lasted, and then out of those only for Eleazar, or two for Eleazar, and then one for Ithamar, throughout.

5. Among these twenty-four courses the eighth is that of Abijah or Abia (v. 10), which is mentioned (~~405~~ Luke 1:5) as the course which Zechariah was of, the father of John the Baptist, by which it appears that these courses which David now settled, though interrupted perhaps in the bad reigns and long broken off by the captivity, yet continued in succession till the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. And each course was called by the name of him in whom it was first founded, as the high priest is here called *Aaron* (v. 19), because succeeding in his dignity and power, though we read not of any of them that bore that name. Whoever was high priest must be revered and observed by the inferior priests as their father, as Aaron their father. Christ is high priest over the house of God, to whom all believers, being made priests, are to be in subjection.

~~<1320>~~ 1 CHRONICLES 24:20-31

THE COURSES OF THE LEVITES

Most of the Levites here named were mentioned before, ~~<1326>~~ 1 Chronicles 23:16, etc. They were of those who were to attend the priests in the service of the house of God. But they are here mentioned again as heads of the twenty-four courses of Levites (and about so many are here named), who were to attend the twenty-four courses of the priests: they are therefore said to *cast lots over against their brethren* (so they are called, not their *lords*), *the sons of Aaron*, who were not to lord it over God's *clergy*, as the original word is, ~~<1188>~~ 1 Peter 5:3. And, that the whole disposal of the affair might be of the Lord, the principal fathers cast lots over against their younger brethren; that is, those that were of the elder house came upon he level with those of the younger families, and took their place, not by seniority, but as God by the lot directed. Note, In Christ no difference is made between bond and free, elder and younger. The younger brethren, if they be faithful and sincere, shall be no less acceptable to Christ than the principal fathers.