

# CHAPTER 27

In this chapter we have the civil list, including the military,

- I.** The twelve captains for every separate month of the year (v. 1-15).
- II.** The princes of the several tribes (v. 16-24).
- III.** The officers of the court (v. 25-34).

## <320>1 CHRONICLES 27:1-15

### THE OFFICERS OF THE ARMY

We have here an account of the regulation of the militia of the kingdom. David was himself a man of war, and had done great things with the sword; he had brought into the field great armies. Now here we are told how he marshalled them when God had given him rest from all his enemies. He did not keep them all together, for that would have been a hardship on them and the country; yet he did not disband and disperse them all, for then he would have left his kingdom naked, and his people would have forgotten the arts of war, wherein they had been instructed. He therefore contrived to keep up a constant force, and yet not a standing army. The model is very prudent.

**1.** He kept up 24,000 constantly in arms, I suppose in a body, and disciplined, in one part or other of the kingdom, the freeholders carrying their own arms and bearing their own charges while they were up. This was a sufficient strength for the securing of the public peace and safety. Those that are Israelites indeed must learn war; for we have enemies to grapple with, whom we are concerned constantly to stand upon our guard against.

**2.** He changed them every month; so that the whole number of the militia amounted to 288,000, perhaps about a fifth part of the able men of the kingdom. By being thus distributed into twelve courses, they were all instructed in, and accustomed to, military exercises; and yet none were compelled to be in service, and at expenses, above one month in the year (which they might very well afford), unless upon extraordinary occasions,

and then they might all be got together quickly. It is the wisdom of governors, and much their praise, while they provide for the public safety, to contrive how to make it effectual and yet easy, and as little as possible burdensome to the people.

**3.** Every course had a commander in chief over it. Besides the subaltern officers that were rulers over thousands, and hundreds, and fifties, there was one general officer to each course or legion. All these twelve great commanders are mentioned among David's worthies and champions, 2 Samuel 23 and 1 Chronicles 11. They had first signalized themselves by their great actions and then they were advanced to those great preferments. It is well with a kingdom when honour thus attends merit. Benaiah is here called *a chief priest*, v. 5. But, *cohen* signifying both a *priest* and a *prince*, it might better be translated here *a chief ruler*, or (as in the margin) *a principal officer*. Dodai had Mikloth (v. 4) either for his substitute when he was absent or infirm, or for his successor when he was dead. Benaiah had his son under him, v. 6. Asahel had his son after him (v. 7), and by this it seems that this plan of the militia was laid in the beginning of David's reign; for Asahel was killed by Abner while David reigned in Hebron. When his wars were over he revived this method, and left the military affairs in this posture, for the peaceable reign of his son Solomon. When we think ourselves most safe, yet, while we are here in the body, we must keep in a readiness for spiritual conflicts. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off.*

## ~~1376~~ 1 CHRONICLES 27:16-34

### THE MILITARY FORCE

We have here an account,

**I.** Of the princes of the tribes. Something of the ancient order instituted by Moses in the wilderness was still kept up, that every tribe should have its prince or chief. It is probable that it was kept up all along, either by election or by succession, in the same family; and those are here named who were found in that office when this account was taken. Elihu, or Eliab, who was prince of Judah, was the eldest son of Jesse, and descended in a right line from Nahshon and Salmon, the princes of this tribe in Moses's time. Whether these princes were of the nature of lord-lieutenants that

guided them in their military affairs, or chief-justices that presided in their courts of judgment, does not appear. Their power, we may suppose, was much less now that all the tribes were united under one king than it had been when, for the most part, they acted separately. Our religion obliges us to be subject, not only to *the king as supreme, but unto governors under him* (<sup>4013</sup>1 Peter 2:13, 14), the princes that decree justice. Of Benjamin was Jaaziel the son of Abner, v. 21. Though Abner was David's enemy, and opposed his coming to the throne, yet David would not oppose the preferment of his son, but perhaps nominated him to this post of honour, which teaches us to render good for evil.

## II. Of the numbering of the people, v. 23, 24. It is here said,

1. That when David ordered the people to be numbered he forbade the numbering of those under twenty years old, thinking thereby to save the reflection which what he did might otherwise cast upon the promise that they should be innumerable; yet it was but a poor salvo, for it had never been customary to number those under twenty, and the promise of their numbers chiefly respected the effective men.
2. That the account which David took of the people, in the pride of his heart, turned to no good account; for it was never perfected, nor done with exactness, nor was it ever recorded as an authentic account. Joab was disgusted with it, and did it by halves; David was ashamed of it, and willing it should be forgotten, because there fell wrath for it against Israel. A good man cannot, in the reflection, please himself with that which he knows God is displeased with, cannot make use of that, nor take comfort in that, which is obtained by sin.

## III. Of the officers of the court.

1. The *rulers of the king's substance* (as they are called, v. 31), such as had the oversight and charge of the king's tillage, his vineyards, his olive-yards, his herds, his camels, his asses, his flocks. Here are no officers for state, none for sport, no master of the wardrobe, no master of the ceremonies, no master of the horse, no master of the hounds, but all for service, agreeable to the simplicity and plainness of those times. David was a great soldier, a great scholar, and a great prince, and yet a great husband of his estate, kept a great deal of ground in his own hand, and stocked it, not for pleasure, but for profit; for the king himself is *served of the field*, <sup>2070</sup>Ecclesiastes 5:9. Those magistrates that would have their subjects industrious must

themselves be examples of industry and application to business. We find, however, that afterwards the poor of the land were thought good enough to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, <sup><12512></sup>2 Kings 25:12. Now David put his great men to preside in these employments.

**2.** The attendants on the king's person. They were such as were eminent for wisdom, being designed for conversation. His uncle, who was a wise man and a scribe, not only well skilled in politics, but well read in the scriptures, was his counsellor, v. 32. Another, who no doubt excelled in learning and prudence, was tutor to his children. Ahithophel, a very cunning man, was his counsellor: but Hushai, an honest man, was his companion and confidant. It does not appear that he had many counsellors; but those he had were men of great abilities. Much of the wisdom of princes is seen in the choice of their ministry. But David, though he had all these trusty and well-beloved cousins and counsellors about him, preferred his Bible before them all. <sup><13324></sup>Psalm 119:24, *Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.*