

# CHAPTER 25

David, having settled the courses of these Levites that were to attend the priests in their ministrations, proceeds, in this chapter, to put those into a method that were appointed to be singers and musicians in the temple. Here is,

**I.** The persons that were to be employed, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (v. 1), their sons (v. 2-6), and other skilful persons (v. 7).

**II.** The order in which they were to attend determined by lot (v. 8-31).

## ~~<1320>~~ 1 CHRONICLES 25:1-7

### THE COURSES OF THE SINGERS

Observe,

**I.** Singing the praises of God is here called *prophesying* (v. 1-3), not that all those who were employed in this service were honoured with the visions of God, or could foretel things to come. Heman indeed is said to be the *king's seer in the words of God* (v. 5); but the psalms they sang were composed by the prophets, and many of them were prophetical; and the edification of the church was intended in it, as well as the glory of God. In Samuel's time singing the praises of God went by the name of *prophesying* (~~<0905>~~ 1 Samuel 10:5; 19:20), and perhaps that is intended in what St. Paul calls *prophesying*, ~~<6105>~~ 1 Corinthians 11:4; 14:24.

**II.** This is here called a *service*, and the persons employed in it *workmen*, v. 1. Not but that it is the greatest liberty and pleasure to be employed in praising God: what is heaven bu but that? But it intimates that it is our duty to make a business of it, and stir up all that is within us to it; and that, in our present state of corruption and infirmity, it will not be done as it should be done without labour and struggle. We must take pains with our hearts to bring them, and keep them, to this work, and to engage all that is within us.

**III.** Here were, in compliance with the temper of that dispensation, a great variety of musical instruments used, *harps, psalteries, cymbals* (v. 1, 6), and here was one that *lifted up the horn* (v. 5), that is, used wind-music. The bringing of such concerts of music into the worship of God now is what none pretend to. But those who use such concerts for their own entertainment should feel themselves obliged to preserve them always free from any thing that savours of immorality or profaneness, by this consideration, that time was when they were sacred; and then *those* were justly condemned who brought them into common use, <sup><1085></sup>Amos 6:5. *They invented to themselves instruments of music like David.*

**IV.** The glory and honour of God were principally intended in all this temple-music, whether vocal or instrumental. It was *to give thanks, and praise the Lord*, that the singers were employed, v. 3. It was *in the songs of the Lord that they were instructed* (v. 7), that is, *for songs in the house of the Lord*, v. 6. This agrees with the intention of the perpetuating of psalmody in the gospel-church, which is *to make melody with the heart*, in conjunction with the voice, <sup><1089></sup>Ephesians 5:19.

**V.** The order of the king is likewise taken notice of, v. 2 and again 5:6. In those matters indeed David acted as a prophet; but his taking care for the due and regular observance of divine institutions, both ancient and modern, is an example to all in authority to use their power for the promoting of religion, and the enforcing of the laws of Christ. Let them thus be *ministers of God for good.*

**VI.** The fathers presided in this service, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (v. 1), and the children were *under the hands of their father*, v. 2, 3, 6. This gives a good example to parents to train up their children, and indeed to all seniors to instruct their juniors in the service of God, and particularly in praising him, than which there is no part of our work more necessary or more worthy to be transmitted to the succeeding generations. It gives also an example to the younger to *submit themselves to the elder* (whose experience and observation fit them for direction), and, as far as may be, to do what they do *under their hand*. It is probable that Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, were bred up under Samuel, and had their education in the schools of the prophets which he was the founder and president of; then they were pupils, now they came to be masters. Those that would be eminent must begin early, and take time to prepare themselves. This good work of singing God's praises Samuel revived, and set on foot, but lived

not to see it brought to the perfection it appears in here. Solomon perfects what David began, so David perfects what Samuel began. Let all, in their day, do what they can for God and his church, though they cannot carry it so far as they would; when they are gone God can out of stones raise up others who shall build upon their foundation and bring forth the top-stone.

**VII.** There were others also, besides the sons of these three great men, who are called their *brethren* (probably because they had been wont to join with them in their private concerts), who were *instructed in the songs of the Lord*, and were cunning or well skilled therein, v. 7. They were all Levites and were in number 288. Now,

**1.** These were a good number, and a competent number to keep up the service in the house of God; for they were all skilful in the work to which they were called. When David the king was so much addicted to divine poesy and music many others, all that had a genius for it, applied their studies and endeavours that way. Those do religion a great deal of good service that bring the exercises of devotion into reputation.

**2.** Yet these were but a small number in comparison with the 4000 whom David appointed thus to *praise the Lord*, <sup><1315></sup>1 Chronicles 23:5. Where were all the rest when only 288, and those but by twelve in a course, were separated to this service? It is probable that all the rest were divided into as many courses, and were to follow as these led. Or, perhaps, these were *for songs in the house of the Lord* (v. 6), with whom any that worshipped in the courts of that house might join; and the rest were disposed of, all the kingdom over, to preside in the country congregations, in this good work: for, though the sacrifices instituted by the hand of Moses might be offered but at one place, the psalms penned by David might be sung every where, <sup><508></sup>1 Timothy 2:8.

## <sup><1328></sup>1 CHRONICLES 25:8-31

### THE COURSES OF THE SINGERS

Twenty-four persons are named in the beginning of this chapter as sons of those three great men, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Ethan was the third (<sup><1364></sup>1 Chronicles 6:44), but probably he was dead before the establishment was perfected and Jeduthun came in his room. [Or perhaps Ethan and

Jeduthun were two names for the same person.] Of these three Providence so ordered it that Asaph had four sons, Jeduthun six [only five are mentioned v. 3; Shimei, mentioned v. 17, is supposed to have been the sixth], and Heman fourteen, in all twenty-four (who were named, v. 2-4), who were all qualified for the service and called to it. But the question was, In what order must they serve? This was determined by lot, to prevent strife for precedency, a sin which most easily besets many that otherwise are good people.

**I.** The lot was thrown impartially. They were placed in twenty-four companies, twelve in a company, in two rows, twelve companies in a row, and so they cast lots, *ward against ward*, putting them all upon a level, small and great, teacher and scholar. They did not go according to their age, or according to their standing, or the degrees they had taken in the music-schools; but it was referred to God, v. 8. Small and great, teachers and scholars, stand alike before God, who goes not according to our rules of distinction and precedency. See ~~403~~ Matthew 20:23.

**II.** God determined it as he pleased, taking account, it is probable, of the respective merits of the persons, which are of much more importance than seniority of age or priority of birth. Let us compare them with the preceding catalogue and we shall find that,

1. Josephus was the second son of Asaph.
2. Gedaliah the eldest son of Jeduthun.
3. Zaccur the eldest of Asaph.
4. Izri the second of Jeduthun.
5. Nethaniah the third of Asaph.
6. Bukkiah the eldest of Heman.
7. Jesharelah the youngest of Asaph.
8. Jeshaiiah the third of Jeduthun.
9. Mattaniah the second of Heman.
10. Shimei the youngest of Jeduthun.
11. Azareel the third of Heman.
12. Hashabiah the fourth of Jeduthun.
13. Shubael the fourth of Heman.
14. Mattithiah the fifth of Jeduthun.
15. Jeremoth the fifth of Heman.
16. Hananiah the sixth of Heman.
17. Joshbekashah the eleventh of Heman.

18. Hanani the seventh of Heman.
19. Mallothi the twelfth of Heman.
20. Eliathah the eighth of Heman.
21. Hothir the thirteenth of Heman.
22. Giddalti the ninth of Heman.
23. Mehazioth the fourteenth of Heman.

And, *lastly*, Romamti-ezer, the tenth of Heman. See how God increased some and preferred the younger before the elder.

**III.** Each of these had in his chorus the number of twelve, called *their sons and their brethren*, because they observed them as sons, and concurred with them as brethren. Probably twelve, some for the voice and others for the instrument, made up the concert. Let us learn with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, and that will be the best concert.