Notes on 1 Chronicles

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1 Chronicles

1 Chronicles 1 - 9:1

The books of Chronicles are much more fragmentary than those of Kings. At the same time they are more bound up with what follows, for this very reason — that they look at the line of promise and purpose, and hence, therefore, are occupied with David and those that inherited the kingdom of David's race. The books of Kings. on the other hand, look at the kingdom of Israel as a whole, and therefore show us the continuation of Samuel much more closely — show us the history of the kingdom viewed as a matter of responsibility. Hence, we have the failure of the ten tribes detailed at great length in the Kings and not in the Chronicles, because there it is not purpose, but responsibility; and we have, therefore, the contemporary kingdoms from the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam till the extinction of the kingdom of Samaria, and then the history of the kingdom of Judah until the captivity. But the books of Chronicles look only at the history of God's kingdom in the hands of David and of his race. For that reason we here at once are connected with the whole of God's purposes from the beginning. We have the genealogy. Indeed all the early chapters are filled with genealogy for a reason which I shall afterward explain; but we begin with the beginning — "Adam, Sheth, Enosh" and so on, down to Noah, a line of ten from the beginning, followed by the various sons of Noah, and their posterity — seventy nations springing from the sons of Noah. Then again we. have Abraham as a new stock and commencement. Just as Adam in verse 1, so Abraham

and his sons in verse 27 are brought before us, with also a list of seventy tribes, or races, that spring from Abraham and his posterity.

It is clear, therefore, that the Spirit of God purposely presents these things. They are not done in any way loosely or arbitrarily. There is a purpose. We can readily see this in the ten names that come before us first of all — the ten forefathers of the human race, and the seventy nations branching out from the sons of Noah. Then again. we can see the seventy tribes branching out from Abraham and his family. But there is another thing too in this, as showing not only the general way of God here, but the principle of God throughout Scripture — “first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual.” We find it just the same here. Japheth and Ham, with their sons, are brought before us previous to the introduction of Shem, and the line of God’s promise in Shem. Here is the Lord God of Shem. So in the same way even with Abraham. Although we come to the man that was called out, still, even there, “first that which is natural.” Hence, therefore, we have Ishmael and his posterity, and even the sons of the concubine, and, last of all, “Abraham begat Isaac.” But even in looking at the sons of Isaac, as the role the sons of Esau are put first, as in the 35th verse. These are pursued, and even the allusion to the kings before there were any over the children of Israel. God’s purposes ripen latest. God lets the world take its own way, and it exalts men in the earth. God means to exalt the Man that humbled Himself. We see, therefore, a common principle everywhere throughout Scripture. Thus, this genealogy, even if we only look cursorily at the first chapter is not

without spiritual fruit. There is nothing in the Bible without profit for the soul — not even a list of names.

Then we have the rapid rise of Esau's posterity, as I have already remarked. We have duke this and duke that; and, finally, in 1 Chronicles 2, we enter upon the called and chosen — Israel. "These are the sons," not merely of Jacob, but "of Israel." It is the purpose of God that appears. Here too they are mentioned merely in their natural order first of all — "Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, Dan, Joseph and Benjamin Naphtali, Gad, and Asher" (1 Chr. 2:1). But the sons of Judah are very particularly brought before us in this chapter — not of Reuben nor of Simeon. The object of the book is purpose. Judah being a tribe first of all chosen for the kingdom, and that too with a view to the Messiah, we can understand why his sons should be first traced out at great length. This is brought before us, down to even the captivity, and after it; and most interesting notices there are here and there — some alas! who transgressed in the thing accursed, but others who were strengthened of God. Such is the history of man.

However, at the end of the chapter, the Spirit of God singles out Caleb's family; for he was the man who, of all Judah in these early days, answered to God's purpose. On that I need not now dwell. We see it in Numbers, in Joshua — the peculiar place that Caleb and his daughter had, the father confident in the purpose of God to give Israel the land. Let the strength of their cities be what they might, let their men be ever so valiant, let Israel be ever so feeble, the point of difference was this — that God was with Israel and against the Canaanites. So here

we find the result, for faithfulness is fruitful even in this world — much more to life everlasting.

Then comes the third chapter — the grand object, the genealogy of David. “Now these were the sons of David” (v. 1) — himself singled out from among all the line of Judah; and as with Caleb from the earliest days of the planting in the land, so with David from the time that the kingdom became evident as the purpose of God. Saul is entirely passed by. David, though later in fact, was before Saul really in purpose, and even during the days of Saul was actually anointed by Samuel the prophet. So we find here the sons of David. Here again too, “that which is natural” — these born in Hebron. They never came to the throne. “And these were born unto him in Jerusalem, Shimea and Shobal and Nathan and Solomon” — Solomon the last of these “four of Bathshna [or Bath-sheba] the daughter of Ammiel,” as the Spirit of God takes care to say. No flesh shall glory in His presence. The last becomes the first. The purpose of God alone triumphs. Solomon, the last of the four, of her that was the wife of Uriah, is the man chosen to the throne. Others are mentioned too. “These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.” 1 Chr. 3:9.

And then the line of Solomon: “Solomon’s son was Rehoboam.” All this is traced down to the end of the chapter.

This is the first great division of these genealogies. The purpose of God is traced down first from nature in Adam, down to the kingly purpose in David and his line. Such was God’s intention for the earth. It had come under a curse, but God always meant to reconcile, as we

know, all things; so the Jew is here given to understand. Here is the certainty that God would recover the kingdom; He would restore the kingdom to Israel. Yet, they misunderstood the time. The disciples did the same. They thought they were sure of it when the Lord died and rose. Not so. The Father keeps times and seasons in His own power. Still, He will restore the kingdom to Israel. And we now have this line continued as far as it was given them then to trace.

And this is another thing to bear in mind: the books of Chronicles are fragmentary. They bear the impress of the ruin that had come in to Israel. In a time of ruin, it would falsify if everything were in due order. The attempt to produce order now as a complete thing is fallacy, and would be a lie if it were made apparently true. Hence we see the utter folly of the religious world in this respect, because this is their effort. We know very well it is utter disorder when judged by the Word of God, because in point of fact even the very foundations are forgotten and supplanted. But supposing the theory were true, it would be a falsehood in its moral purpose, because God will make us feel in a time of ruin that we are in ruins. It is not but what His grace can interfere and abound. “Where sin abounded grace did much more abound.” But it is a wholly different thing to assume that things are right, and to wear an appearance that only deceives.

Hence, therefore — for the truth is a very practical one — when men complain of weakness, and when they talk about power in the present state of things, there is danger — very great danger. We ought to feel our weakness. We ought to feel that things are ruined. We ought to mourn over the state of the Church. We ought

to feel for every member of the body of Christ. When persons make themselves comfortable in a little coterie of their own, and imagine that they are the Church of God, they are only deceiving themselves. The whole state is contrary to the mind of God. The truth is that God and His grace suffice perfectly; but it is as to a remnant. Whenever we lose the sense that we are a remnant, we are false. Whenever we take any other ground than that of being those whom grace has, by the intervention of God Himself, recalled — but recalled in weakness, recalled out of ruin — we are off the ground of faith. This gives no license to disorder — not the least. We are thoroughly responsible — always responsible — but at the same time we must not assume that we have everything, because God gives us that which grace alone has secured.

This is all important, we shall find, both in our work and also in the Church of God. Here we find it in these collections of testimonies of God that are brought together in the books of Chronicles. They are fragmentary; they are meant to be fragmentary. God could have given a completeness to them if He pleased, but it would have been out of His order. God Himself has deigned and been pleased to mark His sense of the ruin of Israel by giving only fragmentary pieces of information here and there. There is nothing really complete. The two books of Chronicles savour of this very principle. This is often a great perplexity to men of learning, because they, looking upon it merely with a natural eye, cannot understand it. They fancy it altogether corrupted. Not so. It was written, advisedly and deliberately so, by the Spirit of God. So, I am persuaded, the provision by the grace of God for His

people at this present time looks very feeble, looks very disorderly, to a man with a mere natural eye; but when you look into it, you will find that it is according to the mind of God, and that the pretension of having all complete would put us out of communion with His mind — would make us content with ourselves instead of feeling with Him for the broken state of His Church.

The books of Chronicles, therefore, really are a mass of fragments. We shall have more reason, perhaps, to see this as we go along; but I merely make the remark just new. They are only the fragments that remain. God Himself never gave more. In the books of Kings, we have a more complete whole; but Chronicles has a character and beauty of its own, and a moral propriety, beyond anything, because it takes up and shows that in the ruin of all else the purpose of God stands fast. That is what we have to comfort ourselves with at this present time. There is a ruined state in Christendom; but God's purposes never fail, and those who have faith settle themselves and find their comfort in the sure standing of the purpose of God.

The 4th chapter begins a somewhat new section, not that we have not had Judah before. And this is another peculiar feature of Chronicles — we have occasional repetition even where nothing is complete, but never a mere repetition. In the former section, Judah is introduced in order to bring in David and the royal line. Here Judah is brought forward because he is a leader among the tribes of Israel. And this section is not a question of David. We have had that. That closes with 1 Chronicles 3. Here we have Judah again merely in his place among the different tribes. Hence we have his line in a general way carried on as before, only with a view

to the people, and not the kingdom. This is the 1 Chronicles 4, with some strikingly encouraging words of the Spirit of God interspersed, on which I need not dwell now. After Judah there is Simeon (v. 24).

Then in 1 Chronicles 5 comes Reuben; for, having had before us the purpose of God, we are not taken back merely to the line of nature. Reuben falls into the second place. “Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph’s.” v. 2. This is given as a kind of parenthetical explanation of why Judah is first among the tribes, and Reuben sinks into a secondary place. Reuben, however, is now pursued; and in 1 Chronicles 6, come the sons of Levi after the half tribe of Manasseh too had been introduced in the verses before. We can understand why the sons of Levi are thus brought forward. Further, we have Issachar and Benjamin all brought before us in this section — Benjamin not merely in the 1 Chronicles 7, but also in 1 Chronicles 8, answering a little to Judah. Thus we have a repetition. The reason is plain. Benjamin and Judah are repeated because they were each connected with royalty — Benjamin with Saul — Judah with David — and as Judah is mentioned first in relation to David, and next to the people, so Benjamin is first brought in in relation to the people, and then in relation to Saul. This is why we have Benjamin again in the 8th chapter. We have the connection with the king, but the king after the flesh. Then there is another reason why Benjamin is brought in, and that is that he had a particular connection with Jerusalem; and we shall find that this is also a grand point in the Chronicles. It is not merely the land, but Jerusalem and Zion, as I hope to

show later, all being connected immediately with the purpose of God.

“So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies.” 1 Chronicles 9:1. Now it is well to make a remark or two of a general kind as to the importance of these genealogies. First of all, they were even more important after the kingdom than before — at least after David came to the throne — and for this simple reason: David altered as we shall find later on in the book, the whole system of religious worship and its appurtenances. It was he that brought the ark to Zion; and it was in the city of David that the temple was subsequently built by King Solomon. But David ordered everything with a view to the great centre of the land. This was not the case before. Nothing of the kind was found during the judges, nor even during King Saul’s reign. The priests and Levites were all scattered up and down the land. After David came to the throne, and was inspired of God to bring in a great change, we find this the occasion of it. The king became the central thought. The king was the one on whom, according to purpose, all hung. The reason was that the king was the type of “the great King” that is coming. Impossible that the Son of God, the Messiah, should be the King, without being the One on whom all depends for blessing. God knew from the very first that there was no way to secure blessing but by that One.

1 Chronicles 9:2-9:44

If we reign in life, it is by Him and by Him only; and if Israel is ever yet to reap blessing and to be the means of blessing throughout the earth, all depends upon the Messiah. Little did they know that when they rejected

Him! They never entered into the mind of God; and, when Jesus came, they were less prepared than ever. Never did God see them in a lower condition. They had been grosser; they had been more offensive in their abominations, but their heart was far from Him. In vain did they worship Him. Hence, therefore, they deliberately preferred man — and man false and guilty and rebellious — to the Lord of glory. “Not this man, but Barabbas.” How utterly, then, all was ruined — ruined morally before the destruction came upon Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. It is always so. Outward judgment follows, and is in no way the cause of our misery. The misery is from within, from self, from Satan’s power through self.

So it was with Israel, so it is with each; and so, further, are we delivered by one Man outside ourselves, and that one Man the Son of God. All depends upon Him, therefore, for us now, for every day’s blessing — not merely for our salvation, but for every day’s light and guidance. All our mistakes arise because, alas! not Christ governs, but self. All our happiness is found where Christ takes the first place. So it will be with Israel by-and-by. But this was not understood then. God shows that He understood it all along, and that He revealed it in His Word; for this it is that accounts for the books of Chronicles the purpose of God. It is all hinging upon His purpose, upon His Messiah — His purpose to send His Son to take up that purpose and give it solidity, to make it unfailing.

David, therefore, acting as a type of the Messiah, orders everything anew. The old state of things according to Moses did not abide in its arrangements. The grand principles, of course, are everlasting; but there was a

most important difference in the form, and that difference of form was due to the superior glory of the one who was there even as a type. How much more when we remember the antitype, the Lord Jesus. David, therefore, orders an entirely new arrangement in this respect. The priests were divided into courses, and one course was to be always on the spot in Jerusalem. That state of things is not in the least referred to in the Pentateuch. But David not only arranged for a house of God, but houses for the priests. There were many mansions around that central house of God for the priests; and there the priests, each according to their course, lived. The consequence was that they required to have the offerings brought there — to Jerusalem. We can see the reason why. God had been preparing the way, even from the beginning, for the offering at that one place that is named — where His name should be placed — that one place that He should choose. Then when the place was chosen and the temple built, we can understand all, because these priests could not have subsisted a day unless Israel had, according to the command of God, brought their offerings and their sacrifices and the like. On this they subsisted. Had there been neglect in this respect, the priests must have of necessity gone back to their own places of residence, and left the altar and the incense, and all the order of the temple, completely neglected.

Accordingly, then, we see the great importance of the change that now took place, and why the genealogies became of such importance, because the books of Chronicles were written after the captivity, when everything was thrown into disorder. The Jews, disheartened by the destruction that they never would

believe till it came, might have thought, “What is the use of a genealogy? What is the use of caring now about our lands or houses? Everything is ruined. All is gone.” But the man who believed God, knew that seventy years would see them returning from their captivity; and, therefore, care for God and confidence in His Word would make them jealously preserve their genealogies in order that, when they did return, they might enter upon the allotment of God. For this was what made every homestead in Israel so precious — that it was God that gave it. It was not merely something that man earned by his own labour or skill. It was the gift of God to them.

Therefore, if an Israelite was bound up very particularly with his family, it was no mere matter of vanity or pride, as among us very often; but in Israel it was bound up with the purpose of God. It was no question of what some rogue had done, so, perhaps, getting his family into favour, as is very often among the Gentiles; but in Israel, all was ordered of God. It was God’s appointment, and the worthies there were men who were worthy according to God — men who had, by their achievements in faith, won, according to the will of God, a place for Israel; for all their blessings were more or less connected, although all was poor and feeble compared with that which shall be, but still it was a type of what is to be. Hence, therefore, patriotism, a genealogical line, families that held on to the remotest antiquity — these had a divine character in Israel, which they have not in any other country under the sun. Elsewhere it often becomes offensive; indeed, if people only knew the truth, a thing rather to be ashamed of than to be proud of.

But in Israel it was not so. There, although there were sad blots, and blots upon the fairest, still, for all that, there was that which was truly divine working in the midst of that poor people from the beginning downward. We can see therefore that these genealogies had a character altogether higher than might at first sight appear, and I have no doubt that most of us have read these genealogies, thinking it was high time to skip over them. I have no doubt we have often wondered why they were ever written at all, and why they should be in the Bible, though, perhaps, without in the least wishing to disparage what was inspired — for I am now supposing pious people. But I am quite persuaded that very few persons, comparatively, have a clear distinct judgment why God has attached so much importance to these genealogies. One reason why I have dwelt upon it now is this — to give, as I trust, a truer view, a simpler understanding, why the Lord in this wondrous book should give us so much that appears to be little more than a list of names.

Well, when they returned, these genealogies would be of capital importance, and of capital importance for the Israelites in order that they should not usurp in order that they should not be unjust — in order that they should be content with what God had given to them — in order that they should link themselves with all that was great and glorious in God’s sight in the past. These genealogies were of the greatest moment for this. In their weakness they would require every cheer and encouragement.

But, further, they were under responsibility, according to their substance, to give to the temple of God — to remember the priests and Levites who had none

inheritance among their brethren, and, more particularly, as the order set up by the king would be restored again, the courses of priests. We find it in the New Testament. We see the birth of John the Baptist under these very circumstances. His father, according to his course — the course of Abia — was at that time doing service at the temple. He had left his house in the country. He was in Jerusalem. Thus the genealogies were of the greatest moment in order to settle justly, and according to the will of God, that which could not be haphazard and of the will of man; but there should be faith in it, piety in it, an owning of God in it.

These, therefore, seem to be among the grounds — I do not say all the grounds, but among the grounds — why God led some of the Jews to pay such attention to their genealogies. And it is remarkable that at least one tribe, if not two, is left out here. I presume they did not think of it; many individuals in all the tribes may have been careless, but it is a solemn thing to find that, from one cause or another, almost in every case in the Bible where tribes are mentioned, one or two are left out. It is the failure of man. No matter what it is, it is the failure of man. If Moses speaks prophetically, Moses also leaves out. This was a sad and solemn sign — the omission of a tribe. The fact is, there will always be these irregularities till Jesus comes. There never will be order maintained in this world according to God until the Lord Jesus reigns. But at this time there was a peculiar disorder — the utter breakup of the people, of the kingdom, the carrying away into captivity, could well account for this. The genealogies, therefore, are very partial; but they were all reckoned by genealogies. And if a priest could not prove his genealogy, he was not

allowed, as we know from the book of Ezra, which is the successor of the Chronicles — the natural sequel of these books. The priests were not allowed to minister at all unless they could prove their genealogy, though they might be ever so truly sons of Aaron.

The fact itself was not enough. There must be the proper register and proof of their genealogy — a thing of very great importance for us now, I would just observe, to draw spiritual profit from; for now in these days, when there is a universal profession of Christianity, we are called upon to prove our genealogies. You see there is no difficulty in bearing the name. The time was when a man confessed Christ to the danger of his life. Now it is a cheap and common thing. Nearly everybody does it. All the world (so to speak) is baptized in these lands. Therefore, plainly, in answering to the type of a priest as of a spiritual man that draws near to God, one must look for more than the mere fact of being baptized. It is not enough — we all feel that — and without knowing that we are acting upon this very principle; that is, we require the priests to prove their genealogies. By-and-by, when the Lord comes, He may discover many a one that we may not have thought of. That does not prove we were wrong. It does show how full of grace He is, and how perfect His wisdom. But we must go by what appears. He acts by what is. He is the truth. We are not the truth. We can judge only according to evidence that comes before us.

So in 1 Chronicles 9 we have the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is the peculiar feature of what begins here — the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And Benjamin is particularly mentioned with a view to that. But, further, the Levites and the priests are brought before us for the

very same reason, and their various offices and work. And last of all, because they had been connected in so special a place — and, indeed, were of Benjamin — of the family of Saul, as mentioned before. These repetitions are very striking in the book. They are not casual; they are all connected with God's purpose, for now the great object is to show the passing away of man's will in order that God's purpose should reign Man chose Saul for reasons of his own. The children of Israel wished a king like the nations. This never could satisfy God. God must choose a man after His own heart. Hence, therefore the' first part of the regular history of Chronicles, after the genealogies, is a brief notice of the passing away of the house of Saul in the next chapter.

1 Chronicles 10-12

"Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinidab, and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers." Chap. 10:1-3. And then we find his death and his armour bearer's death: "So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together." This is the introduction to the book of Chronicles.

The consequence was that all the men of Israel fled. Their hope was gone. But God was able to bring in the dawn of a better day; and, although the Philistines triumphed, and Saul was stripped, and his head was taken, and his armour, and sent to the land of the Philistines, carrying tidings to their idols and to the

people; and although they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon, and it seemed as if they had entirely their own way, yet the triumph of the wicked is for a very brief season. There were those who had sufficient respect for Saul to arise — certain valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead. “They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.” It was a noble act, and acceptable to God; and yet it was not but what Saul was an offence to God.

This is beautiful, this is grace, that God should specially single out the deed of these men, even for a king with whom He was so deeply offended. How little we enter into the mind of God! Very likely we should have thought the men of Jabesh-Gilead were very foolish. Why should they meddle? No doubt there was many a follower of David that would have blamed the men of Jabesh-Gilead. David did not. David understood the mind of God; and David is nowhere more noble than when he pours out his lament over not only Jonathan, but Saul. Indeed, it was what he had lived in; for if Saul envied and hated David, never did David so feel toward king Saul. “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against Jehovah, even against the word of Jehovah, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.”

There was both the disobedience to God’s word, and the seeking of the word that was not of God, but of the devil. “And enquired not of Jehovah: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.” But all the intervening circumstances are left out. It is

the purpose of God that is the point here — not history, not responsibility, but purpose, divine purpose. This is the key to the difference between Kings and Chronicles.

“Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and Jehovah thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over My people Israel. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of Jehovah by Samuel.” 1 Chronicles 11:1-3. But further, David and all Israel went to Jerusalem — another grand point of the book. “And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither.” That is, they defied him. “Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David.”

He had offered it as a great prize that whosoever took that stronghold should be captain of the host.

It is remarkable that Joab steps forward — not Abishai, not any one of those most honourable three, not Eleazar or Jashobeam, or any of the others (the thirty, those worthies that were with him in the cave). None of them, but Joab. Joab was not among them. The truth is that Joab was an ambitious man. He did not care to expose his person more than was necessary; but when there was anything to be got, Joab was the man. Joab was ready for action then, not to suffer but to gain. Joab

therefore goes forward and takes the stronghold, and becomes chief. So it will always be till the true David comes. There will be no Joabs then. His people shall be all righteous; but till then every type has its failure, and it is a very important thing in Scripture to see first that which is natural. afterward that which is spiritual. It is the purpose of God, but it is the purpose of God in David, and not in Christ. It is the purpose of God in one that locked for Christ, loved Christ, waited for Christ, but nevertheless was not Christ. When Christ comes, all will be according to the mind of God. “So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David. And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. So David waxed greater and greater: for Jehovah of hosts was with him.”

Then follow the true worthies of David, the true warriors, not for what was to be got, but for David. And these are, most minutely brought before us to the end of the chapter, not only their great deeds in cutting down the enemy, but their intense love for David. Hence the Spirit of God tells the tale of how “David was in the hold, and the Philistines’ garrison was then at Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!” He knew his native place, and longed after the water that he had, no doubt, often drunk. He uttered this without a thought of anything further; but these three men “brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David.”

This was beautiful. It was no purpose of war. It was entirely outside the expedition. It was love. But David's act was more beautiful. "But David would not drink of it, but poured it out to Jehovah, and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing; shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest." There are others however — not, it is true, among the three mightiest, but who were most honourable. God loves to mention what is an honour to His people; and hence, therefore, after each of their names we find a record of their deeds. The Lord will do this and more for those who now and ever have lived and suffered for the name of the Lord. This then introduces us to David with his citadel Zion, and his warrior band.

In the 1 Chronicles 12 we have another account, deeply interesting — not those that had been the companions so signal for their mighty deeds, but those that gathered round him. First of all, "These are they that came to David to Ziklag," that is, just before the close of all, when the kingdom was upon the point of turning. And a very beautiful thing it is to see that when God is about to work anything special on the earth, He knows how to give the secret of it to His people. There was a providential working on God's part, but there was a spiritual working in the hearts of His people.

It is the very same thing now in the consciousness that the kingdom of the Lord is at hand, in the deeper feeling of it, in the way in which it affects souls, far beyond anything that was ever known; not excitement, not people merely in a panic be cause the end is at hand, or

persons fixing a date, to be disappointed and perhaps give up their faith, but persons who calmly rest upon His Word. Perhaps they could not particularly say why; but this they know, that, whereas they did not attach any importance to the scriptures that speak of His coming, now they do. This is not without the Spirit of God. So with the men of Israel. There was a movement of heart, even while Saul was still alive. There was a rush to David after Saul was dead; but I do not speak of that. This is a very different and a lower thing altogether. But the movement of heart to gather the men of Israel to David in sympathy, before it could be a matter of external allegiance, is a matter much to be noted. These then are described.

“Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul’s brethren of Benjamin.” 1 Chronicles 12:1, 2. The first men that are named were the very last that man would have expected — the men of Benjamin. It is not that there were so many. They were slow afterward. Even when David came to the throne, the men of Benjamin still hung on to the house of Saul. They were slow as a whole, as a tribe, but God showed His sovereignty and His gracious purpose by calling “of Saul’s brethren” from out of that very tribe, and who are the very first that He names as “of Benjamin.” Thus we must never be disheartened; we must never suppose that any circumstances can hinder the way of God. God will bring out to the name of the Lord Jesus in the very last spot that you expect. We must

leave room for the power of the Word of God, and also, above all, for His own grace, His own magnifying of Himself and His call. The men of Benjamin are the first, then, that are named as having joined themselves to David. “The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite.”

Then further we find Gadites. “And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.... These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflown all its banks.” It was even more difficult then than at any other time. “And they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you; but if ye come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the captains, and he said, Thine we are, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.” Then we find of Manasseh also, they helped David; “for at that time,” we are told, “day by day there came to David to help him.”

But from the 23rd verse we have another. The crisis was come; Saul was gone. “And these are the numbers of the

bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Jehovah." Now it was not so much the anticipation of faith; it was the manifest following of the word of the Lord. Saul was gone. There was no question that ought to have exercised a heart. And we find, singular to say, "The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred." One of the greatest of the tribes, taken all and all, the greatest tribe of the twelve, the very one, too, that David belonged to, yet there were only "six thousand and eight hundred ready armed to the war." "Not by might nor by power." How different where man is in question. Take the false prophet of Mecca. Who were those that were his first band? His own family. Take any that are false; it is their own friends, their own companions, some tie of flesh and blood. But with David the first band, we are taught, were those who were most opposed; and, further, the least comparatively in numbers were those that were of his own kith and kin — only six thousand eight hundred. And when you come to lock at the others, you will find it is more remarkable.

Why, even of Simeon, a tribe not to be named with Judah, there were "mighty men of valour for the war seven thousand and one hundred." "Of the children of Levi," although they were properly outside such work, and were more connected with the service of the temple, "four thousand and six hundred. And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites." Even they, you see, felt the all-importance of this that was at hand. "And with him were three thousand and seven hundred," so that between the two there were evidently more. "And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty

and two captains. And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand; for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul"; that accounts for the smallness of number there.

But there is no account of Judah; it is simply left out. The fact is that God would not have His king trust to links of flesh and blood. "And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to knew what Israel ought to do" — a great change in Issachar. In the prophecy of Jacob he was merely "an ass crouching down between two burdens," but now the men of Issachar had profited. They were men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. "The heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment." Of` Zebulun, a comparatively unimportant tribe in Israel, there were no less than fifty thousand "such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war... which could keep rank. They were not of double heart." And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war. for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand."

It is very evident that, excepting Benjamin, which, for the reason that is stated, was altogether exceptional and who held fast in the greater part to the house of Saul, Judah stands extremely short in all this list. So it was that God would not permit that the king of His purpose should be beholden to the strength of man or the ties of nature. But whatever might be the shortcoming here and there, and the differences among them, “All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.” That is, it was not à divided heart. It was set upon God’s purpose; and not only those who were there, but those who through circumstances were absent. “And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking; for their brethren had prepared for them.” And so the scene of festivity and joy is brought before us. There was joy in Israel.

1 Chronicles 13-15

The next thing shows us what was most in David’s heart. Not the throne — that was most in their hearts — that David should reign. But David’s heart thought of Jehovah’s throne; and therefore he consults and says: “If it seem good unto you, and that it be of Jehovah our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.” 1 Chronicles 13:2, 3. And all the congregation agreed. “So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the

entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim."

Shihor is, I presume, not the Nile, although it may be called so sometimes, but rather that brook of El-heresh that divides the land of Israel from the borders of the desert on the Egyptian side. "And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God Jehovah, that dwelleth between the cherubim whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab; and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart."

There was the great mistake. It was all very well for Philistines to send the ark of God in a cart — not for Israel. Israel should have known better. When the Philistines did it, there was a propriety. They had an object too. It was not to be driven; it was to be committed to the kine that were yoked to it. It was particularly meant as a test, because the cows would naturally care for the young they had left behind; and the very point of God's power and manifestation of His glory was this — that although there was very natural feeling on the part of the cows to go after their young, on the contrary they took an opposite direction, and carried the new cart with the ark upon it to the land of Israel, thus giving a most illustrious proof of the power of God above nature. It was not chance; it was not nature; it was God that governed. But with Israel it was a very different thing. Yet I presume they adopted the cart because it was the last thing. So it is that we often do. Even a Philistine tradition will carry away the people of God, so that although the only people, as far as we know, that ever employed a cart for the ark of God were

these Philistines, here we find that wonderful man David, and the priests and the Levites, and indeed all Israel, all joining in this Philistinian way of bringing in the ark of God to the site that was destined for it.

Well, one bad step leads to another, and, although there was apparent joy, and no doubt there was plenty of outward honour to the ark, when they came to the threshing-floor of Chidon, God allowed that there should be something that tested their state. “Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark.” He at least ought to have known better. He who belonged to the tribe of Levi — he who ought to have felt that God was able to take care of His own ark, let oxen stumble or not — he put forth his hand unhallowedly to sustain the sign of the presence of the God of Israel as if He were not there to care for His own glory. He was smitten on the spot, “and there he died before God.” David was displeased, instead of humbling himself, “because Jehovah had made a breach upon Uzza; wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, “How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?” That was the next effect; first displeasure, then dread. “So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.” There was such manifest blessing in that house that, as we find afterward, it could not abide; but there it abode at any rate for three months.

The next chapter, however, gives us not so much this religious picture of the state of things, which you will find to be extremely important afterward, but what I may call more practical — the manner in which the throne of David was regarded by the Gentiles not the humiliation of the king before the ark of God (David's relation to Jehovah) but the Gentiles' relation to David.

"Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house. And David perceived that Jehovah had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was-lifted up on high, because of his people Israel." 1 Chronicles 14:1, 2. The effect upon the Gentiles showed how truly it was Jehovah who had exalted David. Nobody ever thought of that when Saul was there.

We find, then, David in Jerusalem, and the Philistines now thinking that as he was anointed king it was time to bestir themselves. "So all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard of it, and went out against them. And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim." But David abides in the simplicity which brought him to the throne. He inquired of God. He did not say, Now I have got an army; if I was a conqueror over the Philistines in the days of my weakness, how much more when now in power! Not so. He inquired of Jehovah. It requires more faith to be dependent in the day of prosperity than in the day of adversity; and there is where we are often put to the test, and souls that stand well when they are tried, often fall deeply when they have been blest greatly of the Lord. This does not prove that the blessing was not of God; it does prove that we may fail to walk in dependence on God. But as yet David stood, and stood

because dependent. “And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand?” — for that was the great point. “And Jehovah said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand.” There was his answer. “So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters; therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim” (the place of breaches). “And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire.”

Thus you see vengeance was taken, according to Israel’s God, on the insult done to the ark of God. If they had carried off the ark, they never burned it. It burned them, rather, and obliged them to consult how it should be restored to the God of Israel — to His people. But in this case they left their gods, and David burned them. Such was the requisition of the law of God as we find in Deuteronomy. David, therefore, walks not only in dependence and in obedience, but, further, “the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley.” That might have been an accident; “therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, Go not up after them.” How beautiful! We learn that God would have us ever to wait on Him; for the answer of God at one time may not at all be the answer at another. “Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines. David therefore did as God commanded him:

and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and Jehovah brought the fear of him upon all nations."

Now the heart of David turns back, for meanwhile God has been blessing the house of Obed-edom. "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched for it a tent." 1 Chronicles 15:1: His heart could not rest without that. "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites." Now he has learned. He had been waiting upon God. He had got his answer from God in the outward affairs of the kingdom; now he gathers the mind of God as to what concerns His worship, and why his former plan had failed. "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto Him for ever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of Jehovah unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites."

Here we find the greatest care not merely to have Israel, but to have the priests and the Levites. But it is David that does it. The difference is remarkable — that now it is no longer a Moses or an Aaron. It is no longer the high priest. He is not the highest. There is a higher than the high priest. The king is above all — the shadow of Messiah. So we have them, then, ranged in due order. And David calls for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and tells them that they were the chief of the fathers of the Levites, that they must sanctify themselves, not merely the Levites who did the work, but these that were at

their head. “Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of Jehovah God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order.”

We are often surprised why the Lord should deal with those who are walking according to the Word of God so as to expose them when anything goes wrong — why God should not allow things to be hidden, but should bring out what is painful and humiliating. This is the reason. It is the very fact of having His Word — the very fact of seeking to walk by the Spirit of God, by His Word. God, instead of allowing to pass what would be concealed elsewhere, discovers it. Thus we have all the profit, but we have the shame — all the profit of God’s Word, but the shame of our own want of proper feeling. So it was with David and Israel now; “So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of Jehovah God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of Jehovah.” And we find another remarkable feature now, and that is that David appoints, according to his word, music and psalmody. “And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy”

This is no warrant for Christians using such instruments in the worship of God because the distinctive feature of the Christian is, as the Apostle says, to “sing with the spirit and with the understanding also” But an earthly people would have an earthly form of expressing their

praise Therefore all is in season “So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel.” And then we find the singers and others — the doorkeepers, even — everything appointed in the most orderly manner.

“So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers; David also had upon him an ephod of linen.” He takes a priestly place. He was the king, but although he takes the lead and was the manifest chief of all this great procession which brought the ark of God to Zion, nevertheless it is no show of royal apparel or of earthly grandeur. David was most exalted when he took the place of nearness to the ark of God. The linen and the ephod were for the very purpose that he might fitly be near to the ark of God. That was his point — not the throne but the ark. He had the throne — valued the throne as God’s gift, and himself chosen and called to it; but the ark of God was to him incomparably nearer and deeper.

“Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart.” But there are no details

here. We must look to the book of Kings for completeness. The Chronicles give us simply a glance, a fragment, and nothing more. The great point is God's part, and not man's. Michal merely represented the unbelief of Saul's house, the unbelief of the natural heart. She had no sympathy. She felt herself degraded with David's humbling himself before the ark of Jehovah She had no appreciation of the moral grandeur of the scene.

I shall not dwell upon the next chapter now, except just to look at the simple fact that they brought in the ark, and that David, filled with joy himself, sheds joy around about him, and dealt accordingly to every one of Israel, as we are told; and then come the thanksgiving and the psalm, on the details of which I do not enter now.

1 Chronicles 16-19

I said but little of the Psalm that was sung on that day, delivered by David to Asaph and his brethren. In point of fact, it consists of portions of several Psalms put together in what might seem a singular manner, but surely with divine wisdom. They are taken from the 4th and 5th books of Psalms — I suppose most here are aware that the Psalms consist of five books with definite characters. The 4th book consists of those Psalms that anticipate the establishment of the kingdom of Jehovah; and the 5th book, the results of that kingdom. However, there is this particularly to be noted — that the ark of God was now pitched in a tent provisionally in Jerusalem. It was no longer with the tabernacle. This was a most striking change, and it belonged to the peculiarity of David's position. The authority of the king was the centre of Israel now — the type of the Lord

Jesus — for God has reserved the place of chief honour for His Son, and David represents this. Hence we see that the priests retired into a secondary place; the king came forward prominently. So it is said, “He left there, before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark continually.” The ark, which was the throne of Jehovah in Israel, was new in this close connection with the king more than with the priests. By-and-by all was ranged round this centre, but it was only a provisional state of things.

David’s heart is occupied with the glory of the future for Israel (1 Chronicles 17), and he tells the prophet Nathan of the exercise of his spirit. He felt it an egregious thing that he should dwell in a house of cedars while the ark of the covenant of Jehovah was only under curtains. Nathan bids him do all that was in his heart, for God was with him. But Nathan here had not the mind of God. The purpose of David’s heart was right, but not the time or way. God had another plan, and this only is good and wise. So Nathan the same night is told by God to go and tell His servant, David, “Thus saith Jehovah, thou shalt not build Me a house to dwell in.” It was reserved for Solomon. Nothing, however, can be more touching than Jehovah’s message to His servant. He had gone with Israel from tent to tent after He brought them up out of Egypt; He had walked with them, but never had told any of the judges to build Him a house. He had taken David from the lowest position to be ruler over His people Israel. He had been with him everywhere — cut off his enemies, made him a name, ordained a place for His people that there they should dwell and be moved no more; “Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more as at the beginning, and since the time

that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel." He would subdue all his enemies, but instead of David building the Lord a house, Jehovah was going to build David a house; and till that was done, He could not have a house built for Himself. How blessed are the ways of God! He must do all things for us before we can act for Him. David must have a house built for him. That is, the kingdom of Israel must be established firmly and immovably in the house of David; and not till then would Jehovah accept a house to be built by David's son. In fact, Jehovah was looking onward to Christ; and the whole meaning and value of the choice of David's house, and especially of David's son, was in view of the Messiah.

There is a remarkable omission in this chapter as compared with what we have already seen in Kings, strikingly illustrating the difference between Kings and Chronicles. In Kings, Jehovah tells David through the prophet that if his sons should be disobedient, He would chastise them; but He would not remove His mercy from them forever. It was not to be exterminating judgment, but chastening mercy. This disappears here. He simply says, "He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son: and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle him in Mine house and in My kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for ever more.

Kings is the book of responsibility, Chronicles of God's providence. This explains, therefore, the omission here of that which is so important in the book of Kings. The book everywhere presents the responsibility of the kings — not so much of the people, but of the kings, and

hence, therefore, of David's sons or successors among the race. But inasmuch as the great point of Chronicles is no longer to show the moral government of God, and how truly kings as well as people reap according to their sowing, but rather to show this — that God's plan, God's intention, God's mind alone stands, so all the contingent circumstances of the house of David are left out of the Chronicles; only the ultimate thought of God is given.

Now, nothing more certainly will be fulfilled, for God will never give up Israel until He shall have established the throne in the Person of the true Son of David, the Lord Jesus. David bows to God, and, as it is said, comes and sits before Jehovah, saying, "Who am I, O Jehovah God, and what is mine house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in Thine eyes, O God, for Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." Indeed He has as long as the earth shall endure. "And hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree." No wonder, seeing he was the forerunner of Him who will rule the whole earth in a way that has never yet been true of mortal man! "What can David speak more to Thee for the honour of Thy servant? for Thou knowest Thy servant."

Those who apply all this truth to the gospel greatly miss the profit of the passage. It is not but that we are entitled as Christians to take the comfort of the grace of God, or that we are not to rejoice in the glory of our Lord Jesus; but then there is a double mischief done by applying this to the kingdom as we know it under the gospel. First, it hinders us from seeing the deeper glory of the Lord, and our own higher relationship, because we are not mere subjects in a kingdom as the Jews will be even in this time of blessing that is predicted. No

doubt we are in the kingdom of God's dear Son, but how? We are kings; we are kings with Christ even new. We are not yet reigning, but we are kings, kings before the reigning takes place. We shall reign with Christ, but meanwhile we are made not more surely priests than kings. "To Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests."

There is the great mistake which is made by those who apply the prediction to the present time, and to the present exaltation of Christ who is sitting as the rejected King in a new glory of which He is the head; and He is the head in order to bring in the grand counsel of God that we shall be His body — not merely subjects over whom He rules. But then there is another mischief that is wrought by the misapplication I have spoken of, and that is that people blot out the future for Israel. They do not see that God maintains that people in His secret providence, although He cannot any longer own them publicly as His people. But He will by-and-by convert them, restore them, exalt them, as no people ever have been — not even Israel in the times of David and Solomon. Hence we see how what might appear to be a trivial error may be fraught with the worst consequences both as to the present and as to the future.

David then enters into the grandeur of the plans of God, and delights to think not only of His grace toward himself, but also "what one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be His own people, to make Thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before Thy people, whom Thou has redeemed out of Egypt?" Now, it is one quality of what is divine, that it does not wear out.

What is human does. All the works of men's hands grow old, but not so with what is of God according to new creation — according to Christ. Hence, therefore, the end will be brighter than the beginning; and man's notion of a mere wistful retrospect at a lost paradise is poor comparatively, for what God shows us is a paradise of God that will be the end, and not merely the restoration, of the paradise of man. So with Israel. They will have the kingdom incomparably more blessedly under Christ than under David or Solomon. "Therefore now, Jehovah, let the thing that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as Thou hast said. Let it even be established, that Thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, Jehovah of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David Thy servant be established before Thee."

In the next chapter (1 Chronicles 18) the Spirit of God shows us the power that was conferred upon David. He smote the Philistines who were the tyrannous enemies of Israel in Saul's day, by whom Saul himself was slain and his family. David smote them and subdued them. He smote Moab, the old enemy, the envious and spiteful against the people. "And the Moabites became David's servants and brought gifts. And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath." This power extended beyond those who immediately surrounded Israel. "And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought gifts. Thus Jehovah preserved David whithersoever he went." Accordingly, we find that David

dedicates the spoils, the silver and the gold, “from Edom and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek.” Nor was it only David, but his servants, on whom God put honour. “So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people,” and had his kingdom duly set out with servants adequate to the work.

In 1 Chronicles 19, however, we see that there were those who distrusted David’s generosity. The children of Ammon could not understand that David should show kindness to Hanun, the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to him; and therefore the princes of Ammon, thinking that it was merely a political device, in order to overthrow the land by spying it out, suggest an act of the greatest contempt for David’s servants; but this only brought the most grievous retribution upon themselves. No doubt they hired chariots, but it was in vain! and, further, the Syrians were called in, but they were no help. They were put to the worse. Then they tried the Syrians beyond the river. Perhaps they would do better. The Syrians fled before Israel, so much so as to complete the slaughter. “And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.”

1 Chronicles 20-22

In chapter 20 we see David tarrying at Jerusalem, and Joab leading forth the army against Rabbah. This was a sad epoch for David; but, strikingly enough, the book of Chronicles says nothing about it. Its object is not at all to refer to a single sin, except what was connected with

the purpose of God. I do not mean by this that God ever prompts a man to sin, but there are those sorrowful passages in our history which God connects with His great mercy and His purpose respecting us. Others are merely the wilfulness of our nature without any such connection. Hence, therefore, we find that there is not a word here said about the matter of Bath-sheba.

But the next chapter (1 Chronicles 21) shows us the effort of Satan, too successful, to entice David into what was a grievous sin, particularly in him — reckoning up the strength of Israel. Was he a Gentile then? Could David allow the thought that it was his own prowess, or his people's, that had wrought these great victories? Was it not God? No doubt He had employed David and his servants. He had put honour upon them all. But it was God. Hence, therefore, David's wishing to number Israel was a very grievous evil in the eyes of a worldly politician like Joab. It was not that Joab would trouble much about a sin, provided he could see any good result of it; but he could not understand how a man like David should compromise himself so deeply without the smallest change; for, after all, the numbering of the people would not bring one more man. Why, therefore, take so much trouble and run the risk of a sin, without any practical fruit? This was Joab's reasoning. But the king's word prevailed against Joab, and Joab goes on his mission and gives the sum of the number of the people. It was not completed, but he brought the sum.

"And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew the sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin

counted he not among them." The plans of men do not succeed, more particularly among God's people. "The king's word was abominable to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel." This seems extraordinary at first sight — why God should smite Israel — but God was wise. It was Israel that became a snare and a boast to the king. Did he not number them? They roust be decimated now. God would reduce the number, and would make David feel that, instead of being a blessing to His people, he was a curse through his folly and his pride. David, therefore, was obliged to own to God, "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech Thee, do away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

But no! Confession does not always hinder the chastening of God. The mind of Jehovah was made up. "I offer thee three things," said He: "choose one of them — either three years' famine, or three months to be destroyed before the foe, or three days of the sword of Jehovah" — not of the enemy — "even the pestilence in the land." David owns the great strait and perplexity of his soul, but he chooses the last; and he was right. "Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah, for very great are His mercies. Let me not fall into the hand of man." David preferred — and justly in my opinion — the direct hand of Jehovah. What was secondary. he felt repulsive — the famine. He could not bear that God should appear to be starving His people and condemning them to this slow death; or, on the other hand, that the foe should exalt themselves over Israel. This was abominable to his soul. But that there should be an evident chastening inflicted by God's hand, by the destroying angel — this he chose.

“So Jehovah sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.” In the course of it “God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, Jehovah beheld, and He repented Him of the evil and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough; stay now thine hand.”

This occurred by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, for the Jebusite was in the land. The Canaanites still dwelt in the land. It will be so till Jesus comes and reigns, and then the Canaanite will be no longer in the land. And, what is more, God marks His grace; for all is in grace here. It was there He stopped — the last place where one would have expected it — at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Why there? Because there God meant to mark sovereign grace. “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of Jehovah stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.” God gave him to see this. “Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O Jehovah my God, be on me, and on my father’s house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued.”

Thus he takes the consequence of the sin upon himself. This was beautiful in David; we may say that it was natural; it was right. It was far, immeasurably, inferior to the Lord Jesus. There there was no sin, and yet He took all the sin upon Himself — suffered for sins “just for unjust, that He might bring us to God.” But here it was

the king that had been unjust, that had brought this scourge upon the people. Nevertheless, new at least, he is used by the grace of God. Now he presents himself for the blow, but sovereign grace must reign. “Then the angel of Jehovah commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” The place where mercy rejoiced against judgment becomes the locality of the altar. This shows where the temple was afterward to be built — where the plague was stayed by divine mercy. “David went up at the saying of Gad.”

We find an interesting scene between David and Ornan who was willing that all should be given; but no; it must be David’s gift, not a Jebusite’s. “And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for Jehovah, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto Jehovah, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.” How striking! The man that had brought all the trouble — the guilty king, but the type of the Holy One of Israel — the type of Him that gave up His life a ransom for many.

Then in 1 Chronicles 22 he opens his lips in the Spirit of God, and says, “This is the house of Jehovah God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.” Here he had found the place. Such was the way of God. The numbering of the people was a sin, no doubt, on David’s part; but it was a sin that was now completely lost in the grace of God who had thus shown Himself for the people, and also made Jerusalem to be the evident spot where God would hearken to man upon the earth. And

God would bring in that which would stay the judgment, even for the guilty. The temple was to be built there.

David, therefore, orders everything from this to the end of the book, in view of the temple that was to be built, and the son that was to build it. All from this, however, is the preparation for his departure and for this work that was to be done by the son — that could not be left to David — but it is not Solomon that prepares for the house, but David. David and Solomon give us the two grand truths as to Christ — Christ both.. In man it must be separate; in man we see the difference. But still it is beautiful to see that it is not Solomon that arranges all; it is the wisdom of David. And so it will be with Christ. It is not merely that Christ will be the wisdom of God by and-by, or the power of God by-and-by; but Christ is the power of God — is the wisdom of God — Christ viewed as the crucified One, which is precisely the way in which the Apostle Paul speaks of the Lord in contrast with the wisdom of man. David, therefore, arranges everything beforehand for the temple, the house of God.

And it is a remarkable thing — as I may just observe — that the house is always supposed to be one and the same house. Even that striking passage in Haggai (Haggai 2:9), which is given so confusedly in our common Bibles, preserves the same thought. It is not “the glory of this latter house,” but “the latter glory of this house.” It is viewed as the same house from the beginning to the end. No doubt Assyrians or Babylonians may ravage and destroy; no doubt the Romans may even plough up the very foundations; but it is the same house in God’s mind. So complete do we see the line of God’s purpose. God ignores these dreadful clouds that have gathered over the house from time to time; but when the

day comes by-and-by for the glory to dwell in the land, it will be the house of God — so regarded all through. Antichrist even may have been there before, but it is the house of God; and the latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former. The “latter glory” is clearly when the Lord Jesus returns by-and-by. There was a preliminary accomplishment when He came to the house on His first advent; but the full meaning will be when He shakes the heavens and earth which are connected with this glory of the latter house; and this will only be when He comes again.

Well then David prepares all with a view to what was to be built by his son: “And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for Jehovah must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for Jehovah God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of Jehovah my God: But the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. Behold, a

son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever." You see the purpose of God. So he explains that this was the reason why, as he was not to build, he nevertheless was permitted to prepare. David would sow; Solomon was to reap. The details of this arrangement are given us in the next chapter to the end.

1 Chronicles 23-29

"So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites." 1 Chr. 23:1, 2. And a remarkable act of David's appears here, quite in consistency with what we have seen before. He first numbers the Levites; and he numbers them according to Moses, from thirty years old and upward. But even Moses himself gives us a modification of this; namely, from twenty-five years. David goes further. He is the king, and all now depends upon the king. Hence (v. 24), "These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of Jehovah, from the age of twenty years and upward."

Thus David showed sovereign right to act for Jehovah. He only did so because he is the type of Christ. There was One greater than Moses that was in the view of the

Spirit of God, and David typifies Him. It is said, “For, by the last words of David, the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of Jehovah.” No doubt their duties were greatly enlarged; and, great as their numbers might be new, the magnificence of the temple would call for every man from twenty years. And, besides, David would give them all a place in it. It was an honour as well as a duty, and so one can conceive grace acting in calling in the younger men.

In 1 Chronicles 24 we have the divisions of the sons of Aaron, and they are now divided into twenty-four courses. Zadok takes his place as the high priest, and this we know will be the line when the Lord Jesus comes to reign by-and-by. It is not only that the house of David will enjoy its right and glory according to the word of Jehovah, but the family of Zadok will be actually in the administration of the priesthood in that future day of blessedness on the earth. This we know from the book of Ezekiel, who expressly lets us see that so it will be (Ezekiel 44:15). “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord Jehovah.” We can see the reason of this. They were faithful. But there is another reason, too, that does not appear in the prophecy. They were the proper descendants. They were the lineal descendants of Phinehas; and God had sworn in the wilderness (so far did it go back beyond David) that there should be an everlasting covenant with the priesthood and the family

of Phinehas. If God remembers His promises, so does He not forget His covenant with man. It is not, therefore, the promise to the fathers only; but even what may come in because of the fidelity of His people in any great time of trouble is never forgotten of the Lord.

In 1 Chronicles 25 we have the service of song. “Moreover, David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals.” It is called “prophesying” because it so directly brought in God, which is the emphatic meaning of prophesying. “And the number of the workmen according to their service was” — so and so. There were twenty-four courses of the singers. Now, this was another remarkable change. In the tabernacle, song was not the characteristic feature, but sacrifice; but in the temple in the day of glory, the song of triumph is the new and suitable feature. It is not but what the sacrifices abide, as we find; and so they will be on the earth — no longer, as they were, mere legal offerings, but commemorations — commemorations of the great sacrifice, no doubt. God will condescend to use for an earthly people an earthly sign. The heavenly people need none. That is the reason why we have no sacrifices new — because we see what the sacrifice of Christ is in the mind of heaven. We enjoy heaven’s estimate of Christ. Hence, as there is no sacrifice in heaven, we have none; but, when the earth comes in, the earthly people will have earthly sacrifices.

In 1 Chronicles 26 we have the porters, for it is a part of majesty to think of what is least. The Spirit of God condescends to arrange by David for the porters, just as truly as He did for the high priest, or for the different

courses of priesthood. All has its place, and whatever has to do with the service of God is great in God's eyes. Indeed, it is only we who make so much of the differences between great and small. To God, the smallest thing has a value.

In 1 Chronicles 27 we have more the kingdom in its outward regulations. "Now the children of Israel, after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month through out all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand." We find the number twenty-four whether it be actual, or in its thousands, very prominent here. Twelve is the number devoted to perfection in human government — in government by man. In the Church, seven, because it is spiritual administration. In Israel, twelve — twelve tribes, not seven. So here in the kingdom by-and-by; only there is a double witness of it. It is twenty-four. Nothing was established when it was only twelve. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." The Millennium will be the great establishment of the kingdom. And so we have not perfection. Perfection will be in eternity, but still there will be establishment.

The end of the chapter shows us the various ministers of the king — the rulers of his substance — those that were over the king's treasures — those that were over the work of the field, his agriculture, his vineyards, his domains as we would call them, the sycamore trees, and so on, the olive yards, the herds, the camels, flocks, asses, and the other chief ministers of the king.

In 1 Chronicles 28 we have the assembly of the princes, where David stands and addresses them, although he was now drawing near the close. “As for me,” he says, “I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and for the footstool of our God.” This was a great word which it is well to dwell upon for a moment. “A house of rest for the ark.” It was not so in the wilderness. It was either “Rise up, O Jehovah,” or “Return.” It was always motion — motion actually, or motion in prospect. But the blessed feature of the day that is coming will be rest — rest after toil — rest after sorrow. And this will be the fruit of the suffering of the true Son of David. We see it beautifully in Psalm 132, where David, who has been afflicted, prays for Solomon. And Solomon will bring in the rest, but only as a sign. True rest is yet to come. “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” This is not yet accomplished; it will be in due time.

David, then, here looks forward to the ark of the covenant of Jehovah having a house of rest. “But,” says he, “God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for My name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. Howbeit Jehovah, God of Israel, chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over all Israel.” He had given him a good work. He was not to build the house; but he, above all, had the preparation of the material and the ordering of it, even when it was built — not Solomon, but David. Solomon carried out the regulations of David. Therefore, whatever may be the future glory of the kingdom, we

must remember that the sufferings of Christ morally take an incomparably higher place. David was more important than Solomon. Solomon was only the fruit, so to speak, of David. The glory of the kingdom was only the result of the one who had glorified God as the outcast and rejected one, but the real establisher, of the kingdom. Then he says, “And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts: for I have chosen him.” David therefore gives to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch and of the houses.

We see how completely David is the source of everything here. “The pattern of all that he had by the Spirit.” It was not any question of his own will. “And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Jehovah, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things. Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the vessels of service in the house of Jehovah.” Nay, more than that, he gave by weight of the gold for the various vessels, and the silver for those that were to be made of silver — the tables, for instance; “also pure gold for the flesh-hooks and for the bowls, and the cups.” Everything was to a nicety arranged by David. “All this, said David, Jehovah made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.” It was really God arranging all by His servant. On this ground David charges Solomon. “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for Jehovah God, even my God, will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah.” It was the great prospect of David’s

declining years. It was not his own house, but Jehovah's house. He had no doubt about his own; he was not troubled about it; he did not think about it. He prays God for it; he could rest upon God's word. God would surely establish the house of David, but David locked for the building of the house of Jehovah. David could not rest without God being glorified, and he desired at any rate to have his own part. And God gave him a good part — not the building, but all things gathered in view of it, and ordered too.

The last chapter (1 Chronicles 29) gives us the final charge of David. In this he fully states how he had prepared with all his might for the house of his God. "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house" — that is, it was not only what he drew from the kingdom, but what he gave of his own personal property and estate — "even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal."

And now, in the face of this, he asks, "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto Jehovah?" The noble generosity of the king acts powerfully upon the people. "Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes

of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found, gave them to the treasure of the house of Jehovah, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite." All this is enumerated with the greatest care. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to Jehovah: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

Thus we see how grace draws out grace, and how much deeper the joy of David was over God's glory than over anything of his own. We never hear of anything like such an expression of joy for what befell himself. "Wherefore David blessed Jehovah before all the congregation." It is the king, not the priest' now, but the king. "And David said, Blessed be Thou, Jehovah God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name." "But who am I?" says he, for there is nothing that produces so much humility, such true sense of nothingness, as the rich blessing of Jehovah. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after

this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." So he prays for Solomon. "O Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes."

Then he calls the congregation to bless Jehovah; and so they all do, bowing down their heads in worshipping Jehovah and the king. The king, you see, is now the proper representative of Jehovah. And they sacrifice according to the greatness of the day. "Even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: and did eat and drink before Jehovah on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time."

"The second time." Not a word is here introduced about Adonijah's attempt to get the kingdom. It was all left out. The troubles and sins of the house of David are left out, unless they are bound up with some purpose of God. That is the key to it; but here is given simply the result; namely, that Solomon is anointed the second time. The first time was after the house was determined upon. Solomon was bound up with the glory of the house. "Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah" — a remarkable expression — "sat on the throne of Jehovah as king, instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David,

submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel."

"Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead."