

In my high school history classes,
I stress the importance of paying attention to *texts*.
What is the author saying –
that's important –
but then also *what is the author doing*.

If you don't know what the author is saying you'll usually miss what the author is doing.
But until you see what the author is *doing*,
you will not fully hear what the author is *saying*.

The same thing is true with the scriptures.
This is why I preach the way I do.
I want to teach you not only what the scriptures are saying,
but also I want to show you how to see what the scriptures are *doing*.

So to start with, who is this passage speaking to?
The Chronicler is speaking to those who live in the land *after the exile*.

So as we go through what David said in his day,
we need to keep in view what the Chronicler is saying in his day –
and thus, to us.

The key to understanding our passage today is chapter 28, verse 1:

¹ *David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of thousands, the commanders of hundreds, the stewards of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the seasoned warriors.*

The address of chapters 28-29 is directed to the people who are named in chapter 27.
Context is important!

David's address is *not* an address to all Israel –
nor is there any reference to the priests and Levites –
the religious leaders of Israel (named in chapters 23-26);
rather, David speaks to the financial and military leaders of Israel.

We'll see the result of the speech next time in chapter 29.
But first we need to take a look at David's audience.
Who is David talking to?

1. David's Officers and Commanders (chapter 27)

a. The Monthly Divisions (27:1-15)

¹*This is the number of the people of Israel, the heads of fathers' houses, the commanders of*

thousands and hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all matters concerning the divisions that came and went, month after month throughout the year, each division numbering 24,000:

We saw last time that the Levites and the priests were divided into 24 flights..

Here we see that David's administration was divided into 12 flights of 24,000 each.

And so in verses 2-15 we hear about the officers

“who served the king in all matters concerning the divisions that came and went.”

In other words, there were 288,000 men in the king's service –

but they all had their own work – their own land to tend to.

And so they were divided into 12 divisions of 24,000 each

so as to divide the work into manageable chunks.

² *Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division in the first month; in his division were 24,000.* ³ *He was a descendant of Perez and was chief of all the commanders. He served for the first month.* ⁴ *Dodai the Ahohite^[a] was in charge of the division of the second month; in his division were 24,000.* ⁵ *The third commander, for the third month, was Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada the chief priest; in his division were 24,000.* ⁶ *This is the Benaiah who was a mighty man of the thirty and in command of the thirty; Ammizabad his son was in charge of his division.* ^[b] ⁷ *Asahel the brother of Joab was fourth, for the fourth month, and his son Zebadiah after him; in his division were 24,000.* ⁸ *The fifth commander, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth the Izrahite; in his division were 24,000.* ⁹ *Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira, the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division were 24,000.* ¹⁰ *Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the sons of Ephraim; in his division were 24,000.* ¹¹ *Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; in his division were 24,000.* ¹² *Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite; in his division were 24,000.* ¹³ *Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai of Netophah, of the Zerahites; in his division were 24,000.* ¹⁴ *Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah of Pirathon, of the sons of Ephraim; in his division were 24,000.* ¹⁵ *Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were 24,000.*

Several of these leaders were among David's mighty men.

So these officers were trusted leaders – some of the most trusted men in the land.

As mighty warriors they would have had the confidence of the people,
as well as the confidence of the king.

b. The Tribal Officers of Israel (27:16-24)

Then in verses 16-24, we hear about the tribal leaders:

¹⁶ *Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer the son of Zichri was chief officer; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maacah; ¹⁷for Levi, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; ¹⁸for Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri the son of Michael; ¹⁹for Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jeremoth the son of Azriel; ²⁰for the Ephraimites, Hoshea the son of Azariah; for the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah;*

²¹for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner; ²²for Dan, Azarel the son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. ²³David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the LORD had promised to make Israel as many as the stars of heaven. ²⁴Joab the son of Zeruiah began to count, but did not finish. Yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered in the chronicles of King David.

Notice that there are two layers of administration:

the tribal leaders of v16-22 are important for their connections to their tribes,
but David does not rely entirely on them

(the period of the judges showed that the tribes could be selfish and independent).

Rather, he appoints his mighty men to run the central administration of the kingdom.

The tribal leaders, after all, would have less loyalty to David –
and more of an emphasis on protecting their tribes.

(After the death of Joshua, the tribes of Israel quickly move in different directions –
so that the union of the tribes is only clearly seen
during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon)

But it is also worth pointing out that two tribes are missing here:
Asher and Gad.

(They are replaced by *three* tribes from Joseph –
Ephraim and the two halves of Manasseh)

Gad was mentioned in chapter 26 with the other tribes on the east side of the Jordan
(Reuben and the eastern half of Manasseh),
so perhaps the Gadites were represented by one of their brothers here.
Likewise, Asher was far in the northwest,
and may have combined with one of their brothers there.

Verses 23-24 also remind us of the ill-fated census of Israel that David undertook.

You cannot number the stars of heaven – and so any attempt to number the people of Israel
is an expression of David's lack of faith!

c. The Financial Officers of the King (27:25-31)

²⁵Over the king's treasuries was Azmaveth the son of Adiel; and over the treasuries in the country, in the cities, in the villages, and in the towers, was Jonathan the son of Uzziah; ²⁶and over those who did the work of the field for tilling the soil was Ezri the son of Chelub; ²⁷and over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite; and over the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. ²⁸Over the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah was Baalhanan the Gederite; and over the stores of oil was Joash. ²⁹Over the herds that pastured in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite; over the herds in the valleys was Shaphat the son of Adlai. ³⁰Over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite; and over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite.

Over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. ³¹All these were stewards of King David's property.

Verses 25-31 then relate the financial officers of David's house.

David had fields and vineyards, orchards, flocks and herds,
and treasuries all over the land – in cities, villages, and towers.
With large armies and a complex administration over the whole land,
David's financial resources required careful administration.

In the period of the judges

there was very little government intrusion into the lives of ordinary Israelites;
there was also very little protection from their enemies.

In order to have a central government that could protect the people from their enemies,
they also needed a government administration that could mobilize resources quickly.

People often look back and long for “simpler” days when there was less government intrusion;
not the Chronicler!

In the time of the judges, there was no king in Israel –
everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

The Chronicler looks back at the administration of David
and sees David's wisdom and power.

We *need* a king to administer the kingdom of God wisely.

d. The King's Counselors (27:32-34)

³²*Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, being a man of understanding and a scribe. He and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni attended the king's sons. ³³Ahithophel was the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite was the king's friend. ³⁴Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. Joab was commander of the king's army.*

Verses 32 then tell of David's closest advisors:

Jonathan – his uncle (nowhere else mentioned in the Bible);

Jehiel the son of Hachmoni –

these two seem to have been given particular charge of David's sons;

Ahithophel was the king's counselor.

We hear quite a bit about Ahithophel in Samuel.

He was renowned for his wisdom – but does not appear to have loved David.

He was the grandfather of Bathsheba,

and appears to have objected to David's murder of Uriah,

such that when Absalom rebelled against David and seized the throne,

Ahithophel sided with Absalom

and urged Absalom to march out immediately and destroy David.

If it had not been for Hushai (named here in verse 33),
Ahithophel's counsel would have succeeded,
but Hushai – the “king's friend” – counseled that Absalom wait
until he consolidated his power, and then he could hunt David down.

Ahithophel realized immediately that Hushai plan would fail,
and so when Absalom adopted Hushai's plan,
he went home and hanged himself.

After David's restoration, Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, became the new chief counselor.

2. David's Address to the Officers and Commanders (chapter 28)

a. Solomon's Kingdom and Israel's Inheritance (28:1-8)

¹ *David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of thousands, the commanders of hundreds, the stewards of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the seasoned warriors.*

It is curious that there is no reference to the priests in all this.

Certainly Zadok was mentioned as the officer “for Aaron”
and Hashabiah represents Levi,
but the emphasis in chapter 28 is on the officials of the kingdom.

There is a reason for this!

I have suggested before that the Chronicler wants to paint Solomon as a new Joshua.

In Deuteronomy 31:28 Moses says,

“Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers” –
in the context of the transition of power from Moses to Joshua.

In 1 Chronicles David is portrayed as the new Moses
the new lawgiver who changes the duties of the Levites
and lays out the plans for the temple.

Solomon will be the Joshua who leads his people into the inheritance.

Indeed, there is a similar focus on the ark of the covenant
leading the people into their “rest” (across the Jordan) in Joshua's day –
and Solomon building a “house of rest” for the ark of the covenant.

Here David in verse 2:

²*Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building. ³But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.' ⁴Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me*

from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. For he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel. ⁵And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. ⁶He said to me, 'It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. ⁷I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.' ⁸Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever.

Notice also the emphasis in verse 5-7 on the conditions of the covenant.

Solomon is specifically identified as the son of God –

“if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules.”

Verse 8 is then addressed to the leaders of Israel.

It is “you plural.”

If Solomon is faithful, God will establish his kingdom forever.

(Just as Joshua was told that he would cause Israel to inherit).

But that does not absolve the people of their responsibility!

“observe and seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God,
that you may possess this good land and leave it for an inheritance
to your children after you forever.”

Here you see two principles at work:

we need a king who will be faithful – a king who will keep all of God's commandments –
because without a king who obeys God in everything,
we have no future;

but we also need to observe the commandments ourselves.

Notice the way it works:

if the king is faithful, then God will establish his kingdom forever;
in other words, God establishes Jesus' kingdom because of his obedience.

And this is driven home in verses 9-10:

b. Knowing and Seeking the God of Your Father: the Blessing and Curse of the Covenant (28:9-10)

⁹"And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. ¹⁰Be careful now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it."

It is interesting to see how God's covenant is both conditional *and* unconditional.

In one sense, God’s covenant with David was unconditional:
God had promised to establish David’s house forever.
But there is another way in which the covenant was conditional:
if Solomon forsakes the LORD, “he will cast you off forever.”

And so David exhorts his son to “know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart
and with a willing mind,
for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought.”

Knowing God is not merely a matter of knowing doctrine – knowing things about God.
Knowing God means loving and worshiping him –
serving him with a whole heart and a willing mind.

And for Solomon, knowing God means building a temple for him.

c. The Plans of the Temple: “From the Hand of the LORD” (28:11-19)

¹¹Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple,^[c] and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; ¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts; ¹³for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD, ¹⁴the weight of gold for all golden vessels for each service, the weight of silver vessels for each service, ¹⁵the weight of the golden lampstands and their lamps, the weight of gold for each lampstand and its lamps, the weight of silver for a lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand in the service, ¹⁶the weight of gold for each table for the showbread, the silver for the silver tables, ¹⁷and pure gold for the forks, the basins and the cups; for the golden bowls and the weight of each; for the silver bowls and the weight of each; ¹⁸for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ¹⁹“All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan.”

Up until verse 19, we have not seen any evidence for divine revelation
in the particular details of the plans for the temple.

But after David gives Solomon the detailed plans for the whole temple,
we hear a new voice in verse 19,

“All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD,
all the work to be done according to the plan.”

This would appear to be David’s voice,
as he relays to Solomon what God had said to him regarding the temple.

In Exodus there was a great stress on doing everything according to the pattern on the mountain.
Very little of this appears in the planning for Solomon’s temple –
most of the focus is on how *David* organized everything –

but here we have one statement that
“all this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD.”
And then, with language taken from Moses’ exhortation to Joshua:

d. “Be Strong and Courageous”: My God Is with You (28:20-21)

²⁰Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. ²¹And behold the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every willing man who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command."

In the same way that God was with Joshua,
so also David promises Solomon that God will be with him.

Just as Moses had prepared everything so that Joshua could lead the people into the land,
so also David has prepared everything so that Solomon could build the temple.

All the work of organizing the priests and Levites (chapters 23-26)
was to set everything in place for Solomon;

all the work of designing an administrative system for Israel (chapter 27)
was intended to prepare the way for Solomon to build a house for the LORD.