

1 Chronicles 23:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand.

Analysis

Theological Analysis: This passage falls within the section on Levitical divisions and temple service organization. The Hebrew term *עֲבוֹדָה* (avodah) - service/work is theologically significant here, pointing to Ordered worship according to divine pattern. The Chronicler's narrative, while paralleling Samuel-Kings in places, offers a distinct theological perspective emphasizing temple worship, Levitical service, and covenant faithfulness.

Chronicles presents David not primarily as warrior-king but as worship organizer and temple planner. This verse contributes to that portrait by highlighting the spiritual dimensions of Israel's national life. The text demonstrates that true prosperity comes through proper worship and covenant obedience rather than merely military or political success.

Doctrinally, this passage teaches about Ordered worship according to divine pattern. Cross-references throughout Chronicles connect David's reign to the broader redemptive narrative, showing how God's covenant promises advance through faithful human leadership while ultimately depending on divine grace and power. The messianic implications are profound: Priesthood of all believers under Christ.

Historical Context

Historical Background: This section describes events from David's reign (c. 1010-970 BCE) but was written centuries later during the Persian period (c. 450-400 BCE). The Chronicler's selectivity in retelling David's story serves his theological purposes—he omits David's sins (Bathsheba, Absalom's rebellion) while emphasizing David's worship reforms and temple preparations.

The historical setting of Levitical divisions and temple service organization occurred during Israel's united monarchy, when the nation reached its territorial and political zenith. Archaeological evidence from this period shows significant building projects and administrative development. However, the Chronicler writes for a much smaller, struggling post-exilic community, using David's golden age to inspire hope for restoration.

Ancient Near Eastern parallels show that temple construction and royal sponsorship of worship were common across cultures. However, Israel's understanding of worship centered on covenant relationship with the one true God rather than manipulation of capricious deities. This theological distinctiveness shapes the Chronicler's presentation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse's emphasis on Ordered worship according to divine pattern challenge or affirm your current spiritual priorities and practices?
2. What does Priesthood of all believers under Christ teach you about Jesus Christ and His redemptive work?
3. In what practical ways can you apply the principles of covenant faithfulness and proper worship demonstrated in this passage?

Interlinear Text

וְסָפְרוּ	הַלְוִיִּם	מִבֶּן	שְׁלֹשִׁים	שָׁנָה	וְעַלֶּה
were numbered	Now the Levites	from the age	of thirty	years	and upward
H5608	H3881	H1121	H7970	H8141	H4605
וְיָהִי	מִסְפָּרָם	לְגִלְגָּלָתָם	לְגִבֹּרִים	שְׁלֹשִׁים	וְשִׁמֹּנֶה
H1961	and their number	by their polls	man by man	of thirty	and eight
	H4557	H1538	H1397	H7970	H8083
אַלְפִּי:					
thousand					
H505					

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 23:24 (Parallel theme): 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 the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward.