

1 Chronicles 6:63

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto the sons of Merari were given by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

Analysis

Genealogical Significance: This verse appears within the Levitical priesthood and worship section of Chronicles' genealogical framework. The Hebrew term כֹּהֵן (kohen) - priest is central to understanding this passage's purpose. The Chronicler, writing to post-exilic Israel (c. 450-400 BCE), uses these genealogies not merely as historical records but as theological statements about covenant continuity and divine faithfulness.

The genealogical structure serves multiple purposes:

1. establishing Israel's connection to God's creation plan from Adam
2. legitimizing post-exilic community's claim to covenant promises
3. emphasizing Judah and Levi's special roles in God's redemptive plan,
4. demonstrating that despite exile, God's covenant purposes continue.

The selection and arrangement of names is intentional, highlighting Mediatorial role of priesthood.

Chronicles diverges from Genesis and Samuel-Kings in its genealogical presentation, reflecting the Chronicler's distinct theological agenda. Where earlier texts focus on narrative history, Chronicles emphasizes continuity, legitimacy, and hope for restoration. This verse contributes to the larger argument that the post-exilic community is the rightful heir of God's ancient covenant promises.

Historical Context

Post-Exilic Context: The Chronicler wrote during the Persian period (450-400 BCE) to a community returned from Babylonian exile, struggling with identity and purpose. These genealogies answered crucial questions: Who are we? What is our relationship to ancient Israel? Do God's promises still apply to us?

The historical setting influences the text's emphasis on Levitical genealogies and priestly lines. Ancient Near Eastern cultures valued genealogies for establishing land rights, royal legitimacy, and tribal identity. Chronicles' genealogies served similar functions while adding theological depth. The inclusion of specific names and details reflects the author's access to temple archives, royal records, and earlier biblical texts.

Archaeological evidence from Persian-period Judah shows a small, struggling community centered around Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple. The genealogies reinforced their connection to the glorious past and provided hope for future restoration through God's covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding genealogies as theological statements rather than mere historical records change your reading of Chronicles and other biblical genealogies?
2. What does this verse teach about God's faithfulness across generations, and how does that apply to your own family's spiritual legacy?
3. How does Mediatorial role of priesthood connect to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises?

Interlinear Text

לְבָנֵי י	מֶרָרִי י	לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם	וּמִמֵּט ה	רְאוּבֵן
Unto the sons	of Merari	throughout their families	and out of the tribe	of Reuben
H1121	H4847	H4940	H4294	H7205
וּמִמֵּט ה	גָּד	וּמִמֵּט ה	זֵבֻלֹן	בְּגוֹךְ ל
and out of the tribe	of Gad	and out of the tribe	of Zebulun	were given by lot
H4294	H1410	H4294	H2074	H1486
עָרֵי ים	שְׁתֵּי ים	עֲשָׂרָה:		
cities	twelve	H6240		
H5892	H8147			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 21:7 (Parallel theme): The children of Merari by their families had out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.