Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

1 Chronicles

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

The difference between the history given in Kings and Chronicles

The Books of Kings have given us the general and public history of God's government in Israel; and, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, the history of the kings of Israel — a history in which the result of the fall of the kingly power is manifested in presence of God's long-suffering. That which is said in these books respecting Judah only extends to the connection of Judah with the house of Israel during this period.

The Books of Chronicles give us the history of the same period under another aspect (that is, that of blessing and of the grace of God); and, more particularly, they give us the history of the house of David with respect to which this grace was manifested. We shall see this verified in a multitude of instances.

God's history of the people preserved

These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see 1 Chron. 6:15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace.

God's record of names

He records at the same time the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history without being blotted out of the book. Here indeed it is but the outward figure of this blessed memorial of the people of His grace; but in fact this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy from Adam of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly, or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it apparent, the part owned in grace, which stood externally in relationship with that which was merely outward and natural; putting always that which is natural first, as the apostle tells us.

Chapter 1

From Adam to Isaac, the child of promise

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then comes the family of Japheth and of Ham, one of whose descendants began to be mighty on the earth; and finally that of Shem, whose God was Jehovah, and whose line is followed down to Abraham. Abraham, called out from among men, becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity after the flesh is first given us; then Isaac, the child of promise, a fresh stock, whose children after the flesh are exhibited, with their kings and their chiefs, before the child of election.

Chapter 2

Israel: Judah introduced to lead to the royal race of David

At length, in the second chapter, we find Israel, all of whose sons were more or less under the care of God who had loved Jacob.

Judah is then introduced to lead us to the royal race of David, the object also of the promises according to the election of God.

Besides this, we find a picture of the prosperity of Judah's family in general, and that of Caleb's family in particular, who was faithful to God in his generation. God has preserved the memorial of it in this place.* Thus also the way in which the land was peopled and its internal history are vividly presented to the reader. {* It is well to remark here, that in all these genealogies, when a family has been established in a place, the name of the place is often used for that of the family; that the descendants, through several generations, are named together as children of the head of the race (compare 1 Chron. 4:1 with the commencement of 1 Chron. 2); and that, without having been named before, the eminent man of a family is taken to begin a genealogy anew (1 Chron. 8:29, 33).}

Chapter 3 to 5

Genealogy of David's family and of the tribes in relationship with their position

The genealogy of David's family is next given us, as far as several generations after the return from the captivity; and then that of the tribes in succession; but in relationship with their position in Israel, and with the addition of certain notices of possessions acquired either by families or by an entire tribe. Dan and Zebulun are wanting; Judah is found (1 Chron. 4:1). Simeon (1 Chron. 4:24) had had his lot within the territory of Judah, but he had enlarged his domain; and some of this tribe, having gone beyond the borders of the land, had escaped the captivity. Reuben (1 Chron. 5:1), Gad (1 Chron. 5:11), and the half tribe of Manasseh (1 Chron. 5:23), had remained eastward of Jordan.

These tribes together had also much extended their territory, and had enriched themselves at the expense of their enemies. These tribes come together, Judah as the royal tribe; Simeon is brought in with him, because his territory was within Judah's; then Reuben, the firstborn, and with him the tribes beyond Jordan as connected with him. Also they were carried away captive before the rest. The God of Israel brought judgment upon them. Levi came genealogically next; but I apprehend there was a stronger reason; that it was the priestly tribe, as Judah the royal.

Chapters 6 to 9:34

Levi's genealogies and those of other tribes

In the genealogies of Levi (1 Chron. 6) we see, first of all, the line of high priests until the captivity; and then the Levites, their services and their cities. After Levi come Issachar (1 Chron. 7:1), Benjamin (1

Chron. 7:6), Naphtali (1 Chron. 7:13), few in number; the other half tribe of Manasseh (1 Chron. 7:14), Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:20), and Asher (1 Chron. 7:30). Then we find Benjamin again (1 Chron. 8), first of all with reference to Jerusalem, and afterwards in connection with the family of Saul.

The genealogies reveal that where there was faith God blessed individually

But that which has been preserved here of the genealogies of the people — an affecting remnant (through grace) of those who had fallen under the sorrowful condemnation of "Lo-ruhamah" and "Lo-ammi" — reveals to us another circumstance, namely, that, wherever there has been faith, God has blessed His people individually. Jabez (1 Chron. 4:9-10), the son of affliction, seeking blessing in the presence of the God of Israel, failed not to find it. Jehovah enlarged his borders, and so kept him from evil that it grieved him not. Simeon, although dispersed in Israel, was able to drive out the enemy and possess their land, even unto mount Seir. The two tribes and a half beyond Jordan enlarged their territories also, and possessed the gates of their enemies, "because they cried unto God." Afterwards they were carried away captives, because they forsook God. Thus, although there was neither the power of the king nor the order of the kingdom, yet, wherever there was faith, God blessed those of His people who trusted in Him.

The preservation of genealogy the proof of faith

These genealogies were imperfect. The condition of Israel bore the impress of the ruin which had befallen them; but also that of the goodness of God who had brought back a remnant, and who had preserved all that was needful to place those who formed it in the record of His people. If the needful proof to give them a title to this were wanting, such as were of the people ceased to enjoy their proper privileges, and the priests their sacerdotal position, until a priest stood up with Urim and with Thummim. For these genealogies served as a means to recognise the people. Happy he who had preserved his own, and who had so appreciated the heritage of Jehovah as to attach value to it! It was a proof of faith; for, it might have been said, Of what use are these genealogies in Babylon?

The use made of genealogies

As to the Levites — for it is good to serve the Lord — their genealogies, their cities, and their services were known with sufficient certainty, even with respect to those that dwelt at Jerusalem. The mercy of God has not forgotten either to preserve a lamp in the house of Saul; for in judgment God remembers mercy. 1 Chronicles 9 teaches us the use which they made of their genealogies; for those mentioned in it are persons who had returned from the captivity, as may be seen in Nehemiah 11. This portion of the book closes at 1 Chronicles 9:34. Verse 35 begins the narrative.

Chapters 9:35 to 12

The ruin of Saul's house: Jehovah's establishment of David

A brief recital of the ruin of Saul's house introduces Jehovah's establishment of the house of David. All that took place before the people gathered themselves to David at Hebron, and before the kingdom was established in his house over all Israel at Jerusalem, is passed over in silence.

The order of kingly power and the Davidic kingdom

After this we find, as a general subject, the order of the kingly power, and of the kingdom as established in the house of David — the kingdom, looked at as ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took place; — excepting, so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are consequently passed over in silence.

The king and the strength and glory of his kingdom

After having mentioned the king himself, anointed by Samuel according to the word of Jehovah to rule over all Israel, the history begins with that which constituted the strength and glory of David's kingdom. The high priest no longer occupies the foreground. Jehovah's anointed is essentially a man of war, although it is not always to be so. Joab and the mighty men who had been David's companions in arms come immediately after the king.

The first place next to the king is his who delivered Zion out of the enemy's hands;* and this spot, chosen of Jehovah, becomes the city of David and the seat of royal power. We are then told how David's companions in arms successively joined him, though yet for a long time rejected and pursued by Saul, mean as yet in appearance, a fugitive and without power to resist. {* David having built the city from Millo round about, Joab repaired the rest of the city. We may observe that Shammah the Harorite is not mentioned here. Perhaps it is Shammah in 1 Chronicles 11:27: but this is doubtful (see 2 Samuel 23:25). It may also be observed that the exploits of these mighty men consisted especially of victories over the Philistines, the enemies by whom Saul, who had been raised up for the purpose of destroying them, was overcome. Whatever may have been their subsequent achievements, it was there they learnt to conquer, and that they acquired the reputation which procured them a place in the archives of God. It is well that the reader should remember the connection between this whole history, and the establishment of the power of Christ, the Son of David, on the earth.}

David's companions

The first who are pointed out as having come to him — a proof that God and the knowledge of His will had more value in their eyes than parentage and the advantages which flow from thence — are from among the brethren of Saul (that is, of the tribe of Benjamin), and men of the greatest skill in handling the bow and the sling, the weapons with which Saul was slain in the battle in which he was overthrown.

There were some who came from beyond Jordan to David, while he was still concealed in the wilderness; for faith and the manifestation of God's power tend to bring into play the energy and strength of those who connect themselves with it. He with whom God is attracts those with whom God

is working; and their energy develops itself in proportion to the manifestation of His presence and favour. Many of these had been with Saul, but when with him they were not mighty men; many also had never been with him. Yet even in Saul's camp David had been able to slay the Philistines when all Israel was in terror. After that, similar achievements become almost common. At the beginning such things required immediate communion with God, so as to shut out the influence of all that surrounded the man who enjoyed this communion. Afterwards the surrounding influence was favourable, and, in this sense, faith propagates itself. These were but the chief of the mighty men whom David had. When God acts in power, He gives strength to the weak, and produces, by the energy of faith and of His Spirit, an army of heroes.

In those who came from Benjamin and Judah we see that there was this link of faith (1 Chron. 12:16). They knew that David's God helped him. David committed himself to God with respect to those who joined him, for he was in a very difficult position towards the end of his career of trial and affliction. Those to whom God had given energy and strength came to him in great numbers; for everything was ripe for his elevation to the throne of Israel, and for the transfer of Saul's kingdom to him.

The various characteristics of God's army, but their one heart and object

There were various characteristics in this army of God: all famous for their valour, some among them had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, and, in this case, all their brethren were at David's command; others were armed for battle; others had all instruments for war, and were not of a double heart. And these things were according to the gift of God, and they all came with one heart to make David king; their brethren had prepared everything in abundance, for there was joy in Israel. It is always thus when Christ is really magnified by upright hearts who only seek His glory.

Chapter 13

David's zeal for the ark

David immediately thinks of the ark (see Psalm 132). He consults with the captains of the thousands of Israel in order to bring it back amongst them. Loving the people, and beloved by them, he acts with and for them: but his zeal was still too much connected with his warlike spirit; and, while giving himself up to joy, he did not sufficiently consider Jehovah's ways. He imitates no doubt the means by which God had glorified Himself, when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. These were quite right in having nothing to do with it, and in leaving God to act, and to testify of Himself, that He was the God of all creation, exercising a power that overrules nature in His creatures. This was faith in the Philistines; but it was not faith in Uzza to touch the ark. Amongst God's people it is His word that must direct. God may act in sovereignty outside of all this; but here the word rules. Perez-Uzza is a witness that it cannot be neglected with impunity, and that the order of His house in the midst of His people is a thing which He will cause them to reverence. It was through having failed in this reverence that David's joy was turned into sorrow and fear; but the house of Obed-edom was nevertheless a proof that the presence of God assuredly brings blessing.

Chapter 14

Establishment, confirmation and victory

The history of the royalty continues. David establishes himself at Jerusalem, and Jehovah confirms the kingdom in his hands, and it is lifted up on high because of His people. Having inquired of God and exactly followed His directions, David twice gains a complete victory over the Philistines. Being thus blessed of Jehovah, his fame goes out into all lands.

Chapter 15

A place prepared for the ark

He makes himself houses in Jerusalem, and prepares a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it.

Warned by the calamity* which his neglect had brought upon Uzza, the first time he undertook to bring back the ark, David now gathers, not only all Israel together, but also the Levites and the children of Aaron. This gives occasion to the setting forth of the whole order of Levitical service as it had been appointed by David, and of the relation between the priesthood and royalty; that is, that the former is subordinated to the latter, the king being Jehovah's anointed, although the service of the sanctuary belonged to the priesthood. {* It is to be observed, that, although this had its origin in the guilty forgetfulness of David, it nevertheless gave occasion through grace to his being set in his true position for the regulation and appointment of all that concerned the Levites' service. It is always thus with regard to faith, for the purposes of God are fulfilled in favour of it. Man in his zeal may depart from the will of God, and God will chasten him, but only to bring him into more honour, by setting him more completely in the position which God has purposed, and in the understanding of His ways, according to which He will magnify His servant.}

The ark brought with joy and song to Zion

As the head, David orders everything and appoints psalmody for the service of God. Then by the help of God, the ark is brought from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for it in Zion, with offerings to God who helped the Levites by His power, and with joy and songs of triumph. David himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen and an ephod, dances and plays before the ark of Jehovah who was going up to His place in Zion. This action — unintelligible to the unbelieving Michal, to whom the king's behaviour was therefore unintelligible also — was of very great importance. It identified kingly power in Zion (that is to say, the kingly power of Christ, as deliverer in grace) with the token of Jehovah's covenant with Israel — a token established there in grace, when Israel had already failed entirely under the law, and even after their rejection of God as their King.

The altar and the ark

The Aaronic priesthood was not able to maintain the people's relationship with their God, and consequently the outward order had completely failed. The altar at which the priests were to sacrifice was elsewhere (at Gibeon), and not before the tent which contained the ark. And the ark, which was the sign of the covenant and of the throne of Jehovah, was at a distance from the altar at which the priests ministered.

Jehovah's covenant connected with kingly power

The covenant of Jehovah is connected with the kingly power, and that in Zion — the place which He had chosen for His rest. David himself assumes somewhat of the Melchisedec character, but only in testimony and by anticipation (1 Chron. 16:1-3). In these verses the priests do not appear. In order to apprehend more clearly the import of the removal of the ark to Zion, it will be well to consider Psalm 78:60-72 and Psalm 132, and to compare verse 8 of the latter with what Moses said during Israel's journey in the wilderness (Num. 10:35-36). It is interesting to see that each petition in the earlier part of Psalm 132 is exceeded by its fulfilment at the close.

The ark in Zion and the tabernacle in Gibeon

The circumstance of the ark not being taken to the tabernacle at Gibeon was also of deep significance. It was completely judging the whole system connected with this tabernacle. The tabernacle was still in being, as well as the altar, and the priests offered sacrifices there; but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah had been taken away from it. The king disposed of the latter by his authority, placing it elsewhere. Ever since the ruin of Shiloh this judgment had continued as a chastisement executed by the enemy; but, now that God interposes by means of David and acts in power, this power places the visible sign of His covenant with His people elsewhere. The kingly power is established at Jerusalem, and the sign of God's covenant is taken away from the tabernacle of the congregation to be placed on Mount Zion, the seat of the kingly power.

When the people were to journey, Moses said,* "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee." This was when the ark went before them to search out a resting-place for them. When it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel." But, when God had up to a certain point given rest to Israel, they knew not how to enjoy it. They took the ark out of its place to carry it into the camp of Israel, when defeated on account of their unfaithfulness by their enemies; but this was not now the place for the ark. Neither the one nor the other of Moses's expressions was suitable to this transfer of the ark to the midst of the camp. The ark was taken, and, as we have seen elsewhere, Ichabod was pronounced upon the people.** But the faithfulness of God is abiding; and, now that He has interposed in grace and power, and that the throne is established as the vessel of this power and grace, another word is given: "Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength" (Psalm 132:8). Israel, the camp, and the priesthood were no longer the rest of God. {* Thus in the wilderness, it was Israel journeying, who were seeking their rest, who were to find enemies on their way, and whose faith recognised these enemies as the enemies of Jehovah; or Israel carefully surrounding the token of the presence of their God, when He gave a temporary rest unto His people. ** Expressed in these words, He has "delivered his strength into

captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand" (Psalm 78).}

Chapter 16

Blessing and praise

Let us now consider the import of this establishment of the ark and of the throne in Zion, as set before us in the psalm which David wrote on this occasion.

It is true that, so far as it was entrusted to man,* the kingly power failed; but it is not, therefore, the less true that it has been placed in the house of David, according to the counsels, the gift, and the calling of God, and that all the promises connected with it — the sure mercies of David — will be fulfilled in Christ. {* Compare Psalm 132:11-12, the two principles already pointed out in the thoughts on the Books of Kings. }

In that which we read here (1 Chron. 16) the throne is considered in the light of God's thoughts, and of the blessing which, according to those thoughts, is linked with it. David, having offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and having blessed the people, deals to every one, both to man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine; for God will "abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread." Then David gives the Levites a psalm to sing praises unto Jehovah.

David's psalm: its connection with Psalm 105

This Psalm is composed of a part of Psalm 105, of Psalm 96 with some alterations, of the beginning of Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136, which is an important form of words; and of Psalm 106:47-48.

The following are its subjects in the order which the psalm follows. First, Psalm 105 in which the deeds of Jehovah are celebrated, as well as His marvellous works, and the judgments of His mouth. Israel, as His people and the assembly of His chosen ones, are commanded to remember these things, for He is Jehovah their God, and His judgments are in all the earth. Israel is called to remember, not Moses and the conditional promises given to the people through him, but the covenant made with Abraham unconditionally — an everlasting covenant to give the land to his seed. Israel is reminded of the way in which God preserved those heirs of promise, when they went from nation to nation. The remainder of the psalm is omitted; it speaks historically of the ways of God, with respect to the preservation of His people in Egypt, and of their deliverance thence, to be established in Canaan, that they might observe the statutes of Jehovah; and this part of the psalm would have been unsuitable here, where grace is celebrated in the establishment of the people in power after those statutes had been broken. The beginning of the psalm celebrates grace towards Israel according to the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when the judgments of God are in all the earth. This is the first thing founded upon the presence of the ark, and the establishment of the throne in Zion.

Correspondence with Psalm 96

The verses 23-33 are almost the words of Psalm 96. It is a call to the heathen to acknowledge Jehovah, whose glory should be declared among all nations. This psalm belongs to a series of psalms, which, from the first cry of the people until the universal joy of the nations, relate in order all that refers to the bringing again the Firstborn into the world. Only in Psalm 96 the words, "Say among the heathen that Jehovah reigneth," have a place which gives them a more prophetic character. Here the joy of the heavens and the earth precedes this message to the heathen, and, instead of saying "his courts," it is said "before him." The words, "He shall judge the peoples with righteousness,"* are also omitted, as well as the second half of the last verse, which applies this judgment to the world. Apart from these alterations, which appear to me to give this psalm more of the character of a present joy, these verses correspond with Psalm 96. {* "Peoples" (Ps. 96:10) is Ammim; habitually used in the Psalms I think for "peoples" ("people" A.V.), associated with "the people;" that is, Israel, 1 Chron. 16:36. See however 1 Chron. 16:26; at any rate, they are not treated as heathen. In "Judge the peoples" (Ps. 96:10) "judge" is deen (as in Ps. 7:8), referring to controversies and litigation. Shaphat "judge" (Ps. 96:13, twice) is more general judicial authority. "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns" comes before the heavens and earth rejoicing in Ps. 96, but after in 1 Chron. 16.}

The omission of the judgment of the peoples in righteousness is remarkable. It is because the subject here is joy, and the grace of deliverance in the establishment of power, with the subsequent government of the earth, and that the nations are called up to Jerusalem to present themselves there before Jehovah. This is the leading thought.

Jehovah's mercy continually celebrated

We have then in these two parts the fulfilment, in Israel's joy before Jehovah, of the covenant made with the fathers, following after His mighty works; and the call addressed to the nations to come up to the place of His glory.* We have next this form of words, "His mercy endures for ever," declaring that in spite of all the faults, all the sins, and all the unfaithfulness of Israel, Jehovah's mercy has stood firm. It will be when the Lamb, the true ark of the covenant and the real David, shall be upon Mount Zion, even before He assumes the character of Solomon, that this will be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, since David, this has been sung (compare ver. 41; 2 Chron. 5:13; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11). {* Psalm 100 could not have been used here, because before that Psalm Jehovah had already been celebrated as sitting between the cherubim (Ps. 99:1); while the act of placing the ark in Zion was only an anticipation. It is Psalm 96, therefore, which is quoted. It is the presence of Christ on Mount Zion to fulfil the promises in power, before reigning in peace, which explains all these allusions, as well as some Psalms, which seem to speak of a return from captivity, and a rebuilding of Jerusalem, while praying at the same time for the accomplishment of this return. In some the celebration of the blessing is in spirit, and the cry for blessing the fact preceding the accomplishment of it.}

Correspondence with Psalm 106

Psalm 106, which concludes the fourth book of Psalms, opens at length the proofs of this precious declaration, while the psalm we are considering, after giving the promises made to Abraham, passes over the whole history to the end (omitting the latter part of Psalm 105, from verse 16, which speaks of

it, and places Israel under responsibility in Canaan), and goes on with the first verse of Psalm 106, which declares that the mercy of God has continued in spite of everything.

Correspondence with Psalms 107, 118, 136

Psalm 107 treats the same subject, but in connection with the deliverance and the return of Israel at the end of the age.

Psalm 118 brings out this truth in connection with the Person of the Messiah, suffering with His people, but at last known and accepted in the day which Jehovah has made.

Finally, in Psalm 136, the same doxology is sung in connection with the full blessing of Israel and of all creation; beginning with the creation itself, and celebrating the proofs of this mercy throughout all things, until the blessing of the earth, resulting in the redemption of Israel.

Here we may remark, that from Psalm 132, which we have already noticed as celebrating the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the psalms are consecutive until Psalm 136. Only they go beyond our present subject and introduce us to the restored temple, although still speaking of Zion as the place of blessing (compare Psalms 133, 134, 135, and finally 136, of which we are speaking, and which, as a chorus, concludes the series).

The contents of the psalm: its concluding verses of prayer and praise

Finally we have the two concluding verses of Psalm 106, the first of which prays that God would gather Israel* from among the heathen, which will be the result of the throne of Jesus being set up in Zion [5], and the second of which concludes the psalm (as we find at the close of each book of Psalms) by blessing for ever Jehovah the God of Israel. This song of praise contains then every subject which the presence of Christ in Zion will give occasion to celebrate, when He shall already have appeared to establish there His power in grace, but before the effects of His presence have been felt all around. {* This petition proves the prophetic character of the psalm, and shews that it reaches onward to the latter times of Israel. ** See Matthew 24:31 (although it is there in connection with His coming from heaven), and Psalm 126.}

The place of power and mercy

At the close of chapter 16 we see that the king regulates everything that was to be done before the ark, and before the altar which was in the high place at Gibeon (that is to say, for the service of every day before the ark, and for the sacrifices upon the altar); and that he also appointed Levites to praise Jehovah, and to sing that "His mercy endures for ever."

It is touching to see, that the testimony to this precious faithfulness on God's part is not only found in the place where power had set the ark, but there also where the heart of the people needed it meantime, namely, at the altar, which, although the place where the people drew nigh to God, had become after all a testimony to the fallen condition of the people, a tabernacle without the ark.

The sure mercies of David seen in the ark and the altar

Faith, apprehending the counsels and the work of God, could see in the establishment of the ark in Zion (an act which, according to the old order, was thorough disorder), the progress of God's power and intervention towards the peaceful and glorious reign of the Son of David. The sure mercies of David were as bright to the eye of faith as the dawn of day, in that the ark of the covenant had been set up by David the king in the mountain which God had chosen for His everlasting rest.

But all did not apprehend this intervention and these ways of God, so precious to those who understood them; and the condescending mercy of God stooped at Gibeon to the low estate of the people whom He loved, and He still spoke to them after His own heart there, at the altar where this people could draw near to God in an ignorance perhaps which saw no farther; but where, as far as this ignorance allowed, they were faithful to Him who had brought them out of Egypt: there God spoke to them, telling them that His mercy endured for ever. This was in fact a touching proof of it. David returns to bless his house; always a distinct thing, for David as for Solomon, from the people, and from the glory connected with them.

Chapter 17

The Lord's house and its builder

But although David was to connect kingly power in Zion with the ark of the covenant, and thus to secure blessing by the power of the king whom God had chosen, yet the warrior king was not to build the Lord's house. The energy which was victorious over the enemies of God and of His people was not yet the peaceful and glorious power which would bring the people into the enjoyment of all God's blessing, when the enemy should be no more and all should yield implicit obedience to the throne of God upon the earth. Like Abraham, David was to be in his own person the depositary of the promises; but he was not himself to enjoy the result of the promises on the earth.

When the people had been redeemed, their first spiritual desire was to build a habitation in which God should dwell among them (Ex. 15:2),* and this desire was according to the mind of God (Ex. 29:44-46). {* This translation here is more than doubtful, but Exodus 29:46 is quite clear as to the purpose of God.}

But if God had accompanied His people in their wanderings; if He had borne with their unfaithfulness, when He had entrusted to them His glory in the earth, which He had promised them; and if the song, "His mercy endureth for ever," echoed around His altar in the midst of the ruin; if, for the deliverance of His people, He had set up a king after His own heart, and placed the ark (rescued from the enemy) upon Mount Zion, the place which He had chosen for His rest; nevertheless it was still true that there remained a rest for the people of God. The victory which obtained it was not this rest, neither was the grace which bestowed the victory this rest. When God should give His people full and entire rest, then the house in which He would dwell among them should be built; for God comes into the midst of His people according to their condition and their need.* {* When Israel was a slave, God became his

Redeemer; when he dwelt in tents, God abode in one also; when in conflict, God presented Himself as Captain of Jehovah's host; when settled in peace, God establishes Himself in the house of His glory. The interval was the probation of His people on earth. God abode in the tent, and even His ark is taken. He interposes in grace for deliverance. Christ also, since we were born of woman, is born of a woman; since His people were under the law, He is born under the law; now that He will have a heavenly people, He is on high for us; when He comes in glory, we shall come with Him, and reign when He reigns, but in these last we are with Him.

The counsels of God in blessing: the throne established forevermore

But the holy desire to build it for the glory of God becomes the occasion of revealing to David all the counsels of God with respect to himself. Grace had chosen him when in a low estate, and had set him up to rule the people of God, who had Himself been with David wherever he went, who had cut off David's enemies, and who had exalted him. And this was not all. He had ordained a rest for His people, which should no more be disturbed, as it had been aforetime and during all the days of the judges.

Moreover God would subdue all his enemies, and would build him a house. It should no longer be saviours occasionally raised up to deliver a people from the miseries into which their unfaithfulness had plunged them; but the counsels of God on their behalf should be accomplished, and blessing established for evermore in the house and family of the king. The son of David should sit upon his throne; he should be a son unto Jehovah, and Jehovah should be his Father, and Jehovah's mercy should not be taken away from him. He should also be settled in the house, and in the kingdom of Jehovah for ever, and his throne should be established for evermore.

Christ the true Son of David, the King: David's prayer

It will be remarked here, that all question of the responsibility of David's seed* is left out, and that the whole refers to the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ, the true Son of David according to the promise. God takes the matter in hand. While His people are still deprived of rest, He is pleased to go with them from tent to tent, and desires not that they should build Him a house. At length He will Himself raise up the One who shall build up a house, and under whose reign the people, established in power for ever, shall enjoy the rest which God Himself shall have procured them. David, with overflowing heart, makes answer to Jehovah,** who, for His servant's sake, and according to His own heart, had done all these great things, and had revealed them to make His servant know them. Whilst acknowledging Israel's glorious privilege, in being the people of such a God — the only true God, he prays that the God of Israel will in fact be a God to Israel, and that He will fulfil all that He had spoken to him concerning his posterity. {* The latter part of verse 14 in 2 Samuel 7 is omitted. ** It is beautiful to see, in this affecting prayer, how David's heart is full of that which God is in this matter. "There is none like thee"; and, if he speaks of the blessing upon His people, Israel is not that which the people are, but "the only nation in the earth whom God went to redeem to himself, that they might be his own people, to make himself a name of greatness and terribleness." "Let thy name be magnified for ever." This is the proper effect of faith.}

Chapters 18 to 20

David's glorious reign

In 1 Chronicles 18, 19 and 20 David, already delivered from all internal conflict in Israel, triumphs over the heathen, and spreads the glory of Israel and of his reign on every side. These are the events which occasioned Psalm 18, although it has a more extended meaning (compare Ps. 18:36-45).

It will also be remarked that all David's faults are passed over in silence. Faithfully recounted elsewhere, they have no place here, because it is the fulfilment of the ways and thoughts of God in the house of the elect king that is here depicted. The children of the giant fall with the Philistines before the children of Israel.

Chapter 21

Prosperity and temptation: sin, chastisement and grace

But prosperity exposes David to the temptations of the enemy. Head over Israel, and conqueror of all his enemies, he wishes to know the strength of Israel, which was his glory, forgetting the strength of God, who had given him all this and had multiplied Israel. This sin, always a great one and still more so in David's case, did not fail to bring chastisement from God — a chastisement however, which was the occasion of a fresh development of His grace, and of the accomplishment of His purposes. David, in his heart, knew God although for a moment he had forgotten Him, and He commits himself to Him, choosing rather to fall into the hands of God than to hope anything from man; and the pestilence is sent by God. This, by the grace of God, gives occasion for another element of David's glory — for the honour which God gave him of being the instrument to fix the spot, where the altar of God was to be the means of the daily connection between the people and Himself. Jerusalem was beloved of God. This election on His part is now manifested. The spot of ground in question was the threshing-floor of a stranger; the moment was one in which the people were suffering under the consequences of sin. But here all is grace; and God stays the angel's hand when stretched out to smite Jerusalem. Grace anticipates all movement in David's heart;* for it acts and has its source in the heart of God. Moved by this same grace, David on his part intercedes for the people, taking the sin on himself; and God hears his prayer, and sends His prophet to direct him in offering the atoning victim, which in fact formed the foundation of all subsequent relationship between the people and God. One cannot but feel — defective as the type is,** in comparison with the reality — how much this calls Him to mind who took upon Himself, and even in behalf of this very people, the sin which was not His own. {* It is interesting to see the order unfolded here in the establishment of the relations of sovereign grace: first of all, the heart of God and His sovereign grace in election, suspending the execution of the deserved and pronounced judgment (ver. 15); next, the revelation of this judgment, a revelation which produces humiliation before God and a full confession of sin before His face. David, and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, fall upon their faces, and David presents himself as the guilty one. Then, instruction comes from God, as to that which must be done to cause the pestilence judicially and definitively to cease,

namely, the sacrifice in Ornan's threshing-floor. God accepts the sacrifice, sending fire to consume it, and then He commands the angel to sheathe his sword. And sovereign grace, thus carried out in righteousness through sacrifice, becomes the means of Israel's approach to their God, and establishes the place of their access to Him. The tabernacle, a testimony to the conditions under which the people had failed, offered, as we have seen, no resource in such a case. On the contrary, it occasioned fear. He was afraid to go to Gibeon. Nothing would do but the definitive intervention of God according to His own grace (the circumstance of the sin, on the king's own part, leaving no room for any other means). The whole system and principle of the tabernacle as a legal institution is set aside, and the worship of Israel founded on grace, by sacrifice coming in where all, even the king as responsible, had failed. Such was Israel's position for him who understood it. ** And even historically quite opposed; for it is the king's own sin that has brought chastisement on the people. Christ, however, made the sin His own. Nevertheless, this shews us how everything depended now on the throne. It is not the priest who brings in the remedy. David intercedes and David offers. The fact that the king, in whom the promises were, had sinned, made sovereign grace necessary.}

Acceptance of the atoning sacrifice

David having offered the sacrifice according to God's ordinance, God marks His acceptance of it by sending fire from heaven; and at God's command the angel sheathes his sword.

Here all is evidently grace. It is not the kingly power which interposes to deliver Israel from their enemies, and gives them rest. The ark of the covenant being there through the energy of faith, out of its regular place which is now desolate in consequence of the people's sin, it is Israel's own sin* (for all depends upon the king) which is in question. God acts in grace, ordains and accepts the atoning sacrifice; David, in sackcloth with his elders, presenting himself before Him in intercession. {* This difference between Israel's deliverance from their enemies, and the sense of their own sin before God, in the last day, is found in the psalms of degrees: see Psalm 130.}

A new order of things

In the place where God has heard his prayer, David offers his sacrifices; and of this place it is said, "This is the house of Jehovah-Elohim, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." In the presence of the sin, God acts in grace, and institutes, by means of sacrifice, the regular order of the religious relationship between Himself and His people who are accepted in grace, and the place of His own habitation in which they were to draw nigh unto Him.* It was a new order of things. The former presented no resource against the judgment of God: on the contrary, David himself feared to go to the tabernacle; it was all over with it as a means of approach to God. David's sin became the occasion of putting an end to it, by shewing the impossibility of using it in such a case, and by being thus made the occasion of founding everything upon sovereign grace. {*Observe too here, how sin gives occasion to the bringing out of the counsels of God, though the responsibility was also met in what did so. So the cross. Compare Titus 1:2-3, and 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Ephesians 3; Colossians 1.}

Chapters 22 to 27

David's provision for, and ordering of, the house to be built

From this chapter to 1 Chronicles 26:28-29 all refers to the house which is to be built. We see the provision that David made of everything necessary for its construction, the order of the Levites' service who were appointed for song, of those among them who were porters, of the priests in their classes, all being ordered and arranged by David. How entirely all was dependent on the king is especially shewn in this that, without any distinctive break, the other royal appointments of his house, his administration, his officers and guard, are then continuously introduced; finally, the chief among the people, the number of whom is mentioned.

As to the numbering of the people, it had not been finished because of the wrath of God. The thing of interest here is, that all is ordered and arranged by David, even for the doors of the house which was not yet built. Thus, in Christ, all is appointed before it is manifested in glory.

We see too that David had it always at heart, and what immense preparations he had made. For whatever the warfare may be, the glory of God in peace among His people is always in the heart which is in unison with the Spirit of Christ, in the heart of Christ Himself.

Chapters 28

A new system established founded on grace

It is David who places Solomon on the throne, who commands the princes to aid him, and who appoints prophecy in inspired psalms.* He ordains the age at which the Levites' service should commence — a different age from that ordained by Moses.** It is the whole order of the house of God and of the king, which is appointed under his hand; a new system which is established, founded upon grace as its principle. {* Heman himself, apparently, was inspired also. Several psalms are ascribed to him, as well as to Asaph. ** At any rate the probably probationary period of four years is not mentioned. David ordains the age by his own authority.}

Solomon the executor of the order and plans

Solomon only puts in execution the order and plans of divine wisdom in David. Glory is but the fruit of grace. It is the Christ who has suffered, who is the wisdom and the power of God, unto whom all the order of the house belongs. All the rest is glorious, but it is only a result. Only we have already seen that it is in peace, and by Christ, as Prince of peace, that this house must be built. It did not become the habitual manifestation of the glory of God, that there should be enemies to combat; neither was it suitable to the character of His people's joy. The character of such a state of things should be that of blessing -flowing without obstacle from God.

David, the rejected suffering one, ruler of all, typical of Christ

It is very important to observe how everything here is ruled by David. It is important, in the first place, morally. The intelligence, the right of ordering all things, the energy which grasps the whole thought of God, the fellowship with Him in His counsels, the germ and moral foundation of all these counsels, as well as the power of maintaining them, are connected with the sufferings which Christ underwent for the glory of His Father. This is true of us also in our measure. It is the humbled suffering Christ, who is morally on a level with all this glory. It is important, in the second place, as to intelligence in the ways of God; for I doubt not that Christ, at the commencement of His reign, will act in the character of David.

We may also remark here, that the extent of authority which David exercised was very great and of wide bearing. The whole religious order was reconstructed. Everything, even to the age of the Levites' service, depends on the authority and regulations of David, as formerly on those of Moses. All the pattern of the temple, and of its vessels, is given him by inspiration, as that of the tabernacle, and all belonging to it had been given to Moses. He also introduced singing, and divers musical instruments, which are even called "the musical instruments of God," and which, as well as the singing, had previously formed no part of the public service. With the exception of the ark, even the various vessels were different from those of the tabernacle; and for each thing the precise weight in gold or in silver was determined by David.

Chapters 29

The sharers in the work

God would also associate the people with David in this willing service of the day of His power; and, even as they had been associated with him in his wars and conflicts, there are those who shall be so likewise in the liberality which he manifests towards the house of his God. They are at a great distance from him, it is true: it is, so to say, a superfluous thing. They have nothing to do with the wisdom that arranges and prepares, but they are allowed to share in the work. This favour is granted them, and their goodwill is acceptable to God, and it is also the fruit of His grace.

David as leader of the people's praises

David here (1 Chron. 29:18) again acknowledges God according to the promises made unto the fathers, and according to the memorial of God for ever; "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers"; he seeks that which will be accomplished under the new covenant, and directs the thanksgivings of the whole assembly. Sacrifices of righteousness are offered, and they eat before Jehovah with great gladness.

The identification of Solomon with David

Solomon is made king the second time (see 1 Chron. 23:1). The first time was when grace was fully established in the altar built on the threshing-floor of Ornan, where the son of David, as the prince of peace, was to build the temple. Solomon is introduced as the head of all that was being established, and as holding the first and supreme place in the mind of God — the one on whom all the rest depended, which could not even exist now without him. The house, the whole order of the house, and its government, all referred to Solomon; and thus his identification with David, in that both were on the throne at the same time, makes it much easier to understand the type of Christ in this. It is one person, whom His sufferings and victories place on the throne of glory and of peace. For at this moment, although the result of the glory was not yet manifested, God had given rest unto His people, that they might dwell at Jerusalem (1 Chron. 23:25).

Solomon reigning in glory and peace

David now disappears, although it is he who puts Solomon in this position. That which we see, as filling the whole scene of royal glory, is Solomon himself reigning in peace over a willing people, who can offer these sacrifices of righteousness. The son of David is seen in his own true character, and in this character alone, namely, that of Jehovah's anointed, the governor of the people; and Zadok, the faithful priest (not Abiathar), walks before the anointed one (all the counsel of God, according to Hannah's song, and the words of the man of God in 1 Samuel 2 being thus fulfilled). "And Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah" — a remarkable expression: everything is subject to him.

The thought and intention of God's Spirit in this book

The attentive reader cannot fail to observe the prominent place given to the counsels of God respecting Christ the Lord, and the contrast there is between this and the history of Adonijah in Kings — a history which, by the contrast it presents with the narrative in Chronicles, so fully proves that the thought and intention of the Spirit of God in this Book was to give us in type the expression of God's purposes with regard to the true Son of David, and the position He is to occupy, and to shew what will be the character in those days of the throne at Jerusalem, when Christ shall be seated upon it. It will be the throne of Jehovah, and the royal majesty in Israel shall be such as has never yet been known. With reference to this the Book of Chronicles is full of instruction.