

SELECTED SERVICE

1 CHRONICLES 22-26 SEPTEMBER 4, 2019

The Selective Service System is an agency of the government which maintains information on those potentially subject to military conscription.¹ We know it commonly as the “draft”. Historically, men in the United States, ages 18 to 25 had to register, and respond to the call to join the military, should the need arise. While conscription ended more than 45 years ago, the *system* remains in place, despite some recent court challenges.

I was surprised to learn that there’s *another* list maintained by the SSS. In 1989, Congress ordered the agency to put in place an additional system “capable of drafting persons qualified for practice or employment in a *health care* and professional occupation, if such a special-skills draft should be ordered.”² It’s called the Health Care Personnel Delivery System. This plan includes both men *and* women, ages 20 to 54 in 57 different job categories.

While it seems like the general draft of men into the armed services may be a thing of the past, the conscription of individuals into particular jobs *might* be what happens in the future. The idea that led to the creation of the Health Care Personnel Delivery System could be extended to *other* fields and assignments.

During a meeting of the House Armed Services Committee, Representative Martha McSally, a former Air Force fighter pilot, had this to say concerning how the draft might be adapted in the future: “It could be medical positions, we could need cyber warriors -- there are all sorts of positions we’d need the country to mobilize for.”³

I got to thinking about conscription and the idea of setting up an administration and jobs for what might come in the future because of a passage in First Chronicles. In chapters 22 through 26 we’re given the story of how David put in place an administrative system for staffing the temple and maintaining it generation after generation. Now, there *was* no temple at this point. And David knew he’d never see it built in his lifetime. Yet, he dedicated the last years of his life making plans, storing up supplies and conscripting thousands of Levites into particular areas of service.

What’s amazing is that, even though the Levites were *conscripted* into their work, *told* what they would be doing, we’re given no indication that there was ever a lawsuit against this system. That would be silly, of course, but there are no stories of some group of Levites coming to the king and refusing the draft. On the flip side, there also wasn’t some sort of religious police that went around making sure the Levites did what they had been commanded to do by the king.

The arrangement was: For this tribe, *God* was their inheritance. And they had the rare and precious privilege of working in His house and representing Him among the people.

As Christians in the Church, there are many ways in which our calling is similar to that of the Levites. First of all, each and every one of us *is* conscripted into service in the world and in the house of God, by virtue of being a part of the family. Like the Levites, we’ve got different callings and duties within God’s house. Like the Levites, our work continues generation after generation.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selective_service

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription_in_the_United_States#Health_care_personnel

³ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/military-draft-coders-tech-experts_n_572cddf7e4b0bc9cb046a2f9

So, when we come across a passage like this one in First Chronicles, it can provide some encouraging devotional insights for us as we apply principles we see here to our own lives and our own place in the work of God.

In our limited time we won't have the luxury of going through all 5 chapters. But I'd encourage you to listen through it sometime this week. Instead, let me set the stage and then we can examine what was established by David, so that we can take some of the characteristics to heart.

David wanted to build God a permanent house in Jerusalem. God had to tell him that he would *not* be the man to do it. Rather, his son Solomon would be the temple builder. But, David heard that and thought, "Just because I'm not the person to cut the ribbon on the temple doesn't mean I can't be a part of the work." And so he poured himself into the preparation process. Gathering materials. Getting people on board. Drawing up plans. In chapter 22 we read about him storing up iron and precious metals, an "immeasurable quantity of bronze" for all that would need to be made. We see him appointing stonecutters and getting cedar imported. It says this in First Chronicles 22, verse 5:

1 Chronicles 22:5b - ... the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly great and famous and glorious in all the lands. Therefore, I must make provision for it." So David made lavish preparations for it before his death.

Of course, the temple would not just need *stuff*, but it would need a lot of *staff*. And so, in the chapters that follow, we see the various clans of Levi being assigned to different aspects of temple work. And, being Chronicles, there are a bunch of lists of numbers and names of who was who and what they would do. But here are some characteristics stand out as you work through the plan.

First, and most general, as you read through the lists and assignments, you're reminded again and again that it was a *family* affair. There's an emphasis on clans and fathers and *which* line of Levi each servant was from. Now, Israel was a tribal society. And there were very specific rules that God had put into place concerning tribe and heritage. *Only* Levites could serve the Lord in this special way. And *only* Levites from the line of Aaron could be priests, for example.

Now, in the Church, we do not have that kind of tribal separation. We're *all* part of God's holy priesthood. The walls of ethnicity or heritage are broken down and we're united in Christ. But one way this constant reference in the text to tribe and fathers and sons and families speaks to us is to remember that, in the Church, we are a *family* brought together under Christ's loving headship and commanded to love and serve one another. If you were a Levite serving in the temple, you were *literally* kin with your co-workers. But *spiritual* brotherhood is to be just as real. The epistles *assume* we will regard one another as brothers and sisters. Not that we just have some loose affiliation, but that we consider and operate and communicate with each other the way a loving family does.

In chapter 26, verse 13 we see they were *assigned* by family. In chapter 25 verse 7 they're trained by family. They would be undertaking their assignments *together*, learning *together*, supporting each other and helping each other along. What a great reminder for local churches that we're to operate as a loving and unified family, Growing together and in it for the long haul.

We also notice in these chapters that, in this work, there was a lot of different *kinds* of work to do, open to a *wide variety* of those called to serve.

1 Chronicles 25:8 - ⁸They cast lots for their duties, young and old alike, teacher as well as pupil.

We're told in multiple places that young and old alike had a share. Teachers and students. Heads of families and younger brothers. Now, of course, under the Old Testament law there were a lot of exclusions. You had to be a *man* from the tribe of Levi to do this work. You couldn't be crippled or deformed. But in the church, those distinctions are gone when it comes to serving the Lord. In Christ, we're told, there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. Now we're all one Body and one Building, built up as God's house. And what we find throughout the Bible and throughout history is that God can use *anyone* to do His work. David himself is a great example of what God can do. God took the ruddy, afterthought, shepherd boy and made him a warrior, a poet, a king, an instrument maker, a prophet. God worked through David in the arts, in administration, in advancing the kingdom. All because David had a servant's heart and because he sought the Lord.

When we look at the work of God through His church, there is a *lot* to do. I don't just mean here, locally (though there's a lot to do here), but in God's work globally, there's much more work and many more opportunities than any of us could hope to accomplish in a lifetime. And the *good* news is that there is a place for young and old, master and apprentice, skilled and unskilled.

Now, it's true, some positions in the temple administration required "capable" individuals. In chapter 26 we're told, for instance, about the officers and judges.

1 Chronicles 26:31b - A search was made in the fortieth year of David's reign and strong, capable men were found among them at Jazer in Gilead.

In the Church, there are some areas which require particular capability or qualifications. But, there's no one in God's family who He's not interested in including in the work. Even in this Chronicles passage, we don't see some clan of Levi showing up, ready to be given their assignment, and David says, "Sorry. We've got nothing for you." In fact, there was a *lot* to do. Some did this, some did that.

Not only was there a lot of different *kinds* of work to do, it was a work that would have to be done *perpetually*. Here are a couple of examples. David says in chapter 22, verse 14:

1 Chronicles 22:14 - ¹⁴Notice I have taken great pains to provide for the house of the Lord— 3,775 tons of gold, 37,750 tons of silver, and bronze and iron that can't be weighed because there is so much of it. I have also provided timber and stone, but you will need to add more to them.

1 Chronicles 26:27 - ²⁷They dedicated part of the plunder from their battles for the repair of the Lord's temple.

They were making a plan to provide for the maintenance and repair of a temple that hadn't even been built yet! The idea was that the work would continue until the end. Of course, the same idea is meant to permeate our service to the Lord. I'm to live as a lifelong servant of the King until He calls me home or brings His Kingdom here. And *then*, we'll still be serving Him, just in different ways.

I had a friend ask me recently what I thought our church would be doing in 40 years. It's an interesting question. While we, of course, believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ, we also

want to be mindful and thoughtful about what work the future might hold for us, should the Lord postpone our arrival date to heaven.

As we look forward to the continuing work of God in our church and in our families and in our individual lives, we should consider things like: What does it mean to be a faithful, fruit-producing Grandparent? Or, what will Hanford need in 15 years? 20 years? We want to be growing people who don't just get stuck in the same patterns forever. We want to be growing in capacity and effectiveness and taking new ground in our service to the Lord.

We think this way when it comes to investing, right? There are long-term investments and short-term investments. Some of you probably go to garage sales and find items that you can clean up or improve and flip either online or at a sale of your own. That's a great, short-term investment. But then, some investments take a lot of time to mature. Deferred annuities, for example, start paying sometimes *decades* in the future. Things like IRAs and mutual funds require thoughtful planning, patience and faithful investment so that one day there's a great return on the efforts.

The Levites were thinking about what the temple would need *decades* down the line. We want to think about God's work like that as well, while we're also giving ourselves to the needs of today.

As you read these chapters you see that there were a lot of different types of work. Guys who watched the gates, guys who were musicians, guys who worked with sacrifices, guys who were accountants. Bakers. Judges. All sorts of work. But, they didn't get to pick the thing that they wanted to do. It was *assigned* to them. Perhaps, in some cases, it wasn't what they would've hoped for. Maybe someone from sons of Ladan played a mean harp and would've rather been assigned to the worship team than the oversight of the treasuries. But, it was the will of the king that they were to humble themselves under. The application for our own service is plain and simple. God is the Master Builder. Jesus is our head. He is to assign, we are to obey and trust His judgment.

How were they assigned? Well, here in Israel, it was by the casting of lots. We've seen in our studies in Acts that we no longer go to the lot for direction or assignment. Rather, we're told to seek the Lord and follow the Spirit to find those answers. We're to search out the Lord's will and discover what particular service God the Holy Spirit has selected us for. It's God's desire to reveal that to us so that His work can flourish and expand. He doesn't want to hide these sort of answers from us. After all, He's given us various gifts, various callings, various duties so *that* we all fit together perfectly, as each part does its own special work. And when we are all doing our special work, it helps the other parts grow so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

The last characteristic of this section I'd have us note tonight is that this was an *imperative* work. It wasn't just some king's vanity project. It was important and urgent and something for everyone to get behind. In chapter 22 we're told David "gave orders" to gather together and start things going. He tells them in verse 19: "Determine in your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Get started building the Lord God's sanctuary." And in verse 16 we read this:

1 Chronicles 22:16 - Now begin the work, and may the Lord be with you.

The work was imperative and important. But, it wasn't supposed to be a back-breaking burden. It was meant to be a blessing to these servants and to the nation and the wider world, as these children of God served together, as a family, doing a great variety of work generation after generation, the world would be changed by the glory of God. That was the idea, anyway. That they,

equipped by God, supplied by His riches, supporting one another, would make a magnificent house, “famous and glorious throughout the world.”

Each part of the work was *significant* and necessary. There was room for a countless number of servants, generation after generation. Today, as God’s people serve Him, it is not in the confines of *one building* in Jerusalem, but through the global *Body* of Christ. Together, let’s determine in our minds and hearts to seek the Lord our God and continue honoring Him in whatever service He has selected each of us for.