

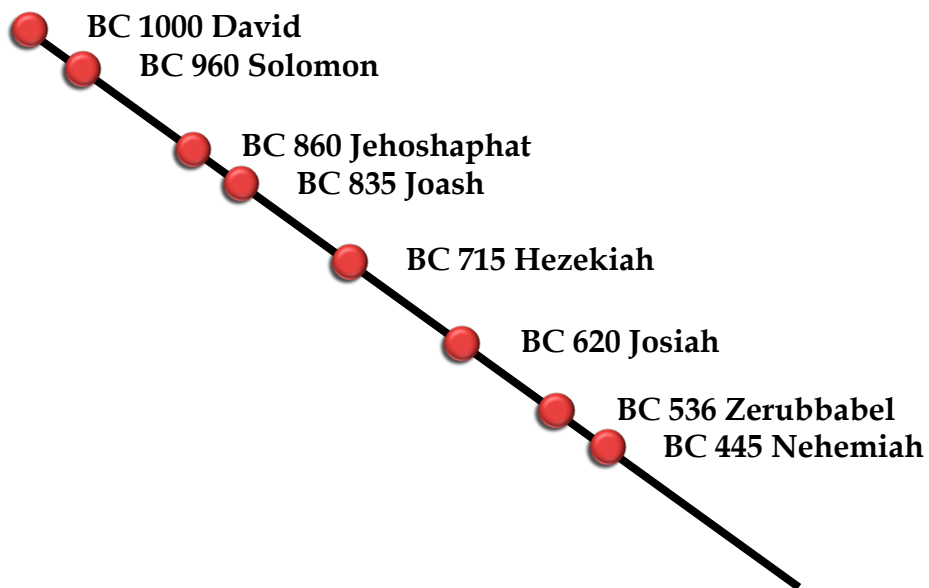
The House Of Asaph

Family
of
Faith



Masters
of
Music

The House Of Asaph | Family Of Faith



The House Of Asaph

Study One

The Founding Of The House Of Asaph



Asaph – The First Chief Musician

*Several passages imply that the inaugural role of Chief Musician was awarded to **Asaph** by David who singled him out for a leadership role in the music of the sanctuary*

- **1 Chronicles 16:4-5** – “And he (David) appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: **Asaph** the chief”.
- **2 Chronicles 29:30** – “Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David and of **Asaph** the seer ”.
- **Nehemiah 12:46** – “For in the days of David and **Asaph** of old there was a chief of the singers and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God”.

The Role Of Chief Musician

- “There can be little doubt that the word *‘natsach’* means the precentor or conductor of the temple choir, who trained the choir and led the music.

Here we see the distinction between the poet and the precentor... The preposition *‘lamed’* prefixed to *‘natsach’* must be understood as meaning that the psalm belonged to the precentor for singing purposes, equally as it belonged to the poet as its author... that a psalm conveyed a timely lesson, seems to have determined its selection for a given season or purpose in public worship”.

James Thirtle
The Titles of the Psalms, Pages 6-8

The Founding Of The House Of Asaph

- The instruction to Asaph was that he might lead the singing before the ark (**1 Chronicles 16:37**), to ensure that its spiritual meaning and significance would be perpetuated throughout the history of the nation.
- Asaph fulfilled this charge by teaching his sons. They learned spiritual commitment by standing with their father (**1 Chronicles 6:33**) as he ministered every day with singing before the ark. (**Psalms 78:1-7**)
- The phrase ‘the sons of Asaph’ became synonymous with the spiritual excellence (**1 Chronicles 25:2, 2 Chronicles 5:12, 20:14, 29:13, 35:15, Ezra 3:10, Nehemiah 11:22**)

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

- Their music ascribed both thanks and praise and consistently promoted **the supremacy of God**.
- Their music elevated deep spiritual thought and strongly emphasized **the pre-eminence of principle**
- Their music showed reverence for the divine and carefully maintained **the solemnity of worship**.
- Their music represented the spirit of dedication and continually demanded **the excellence of endeavour**.
- Their music expressed the joy of eternal truths and unceasingly proclaimed **the virtue of constancy**.

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle One – The Supremacy Of God

- The greatest theme of the songs of the LORD was quite simply **the supremacy of God** Himself. The great foundation psalm delivered to the House Of Asaph mightily established this principle. (**1 Chronicles 16:8-12, 23-29, 34-36**).
- This principle is the essential and primary doctrine on which all proper praise is based. Christianity had lost this key. Their hymns are not theocentric but egocentric, reflecting the spirit of humanism which is their real focus. The House Of Asaph repudiated this, and established **the supremacy of God** as the benchmark of all their thinking and praise (**1 Chronicles 16:35**).

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

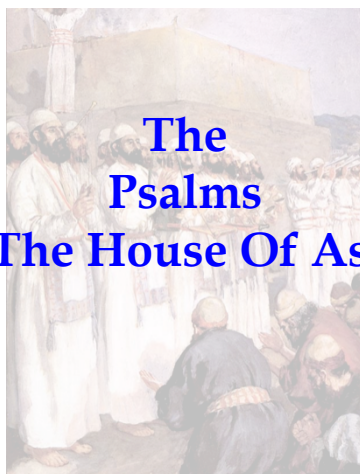
Principle One – The Supremacy Of God

- All the great leaders who initiated spiritual reform in Israel were deeply imbued with this principle: Jehoshaphat (**2 Chronicles 20:6-12**), Hezekiah (**2 Kings 19:14-19**), Josiah (**2 Kings 23:1-3**), Ezra (**Ezra 9:5-8,15**), Nehemiah (**Nehemiah 9:5-11**).
- The House of Asaph laboured gladly with these men because their hearts beat as one concerning this greatest of truths. The psalms of the House Of Asaph show the same unwavering commitment to upholding this principle of **the supremacy of God**: (**Psalms 73:22-28, 74:18-23, 75:1, 6-9, 76:7-12, 77:9-15, 79:6-13, 80:14-19, 83:13-18**).

The House Of Asaph

Study Two

The Psalms Of The House Of Asaph



The Psalms Of The House Of Asaph

- The psalms of Asaph appear to span many centuries and epochs in Israel's history. If written by Asaph as prophecies then they would not have had meaning in his own time. It is more probable they were added through time as the nation's experience unfolded.
- The writing of these psalms echo the very language and incident of key historical events. The urgency of expressions used, argues that they were written at the moment of the crisis by someone who was a witness.
- The settings of these psalms not only match the key events in the nation, but also match the very times in history when the House of Asaph were known to be active in the spiritual affairs of Israel.

The Psalms Of The House Of Asaph

Rehoboam

Psalm 78

(2 Chronicles 5:12)

Jehoshaphat

Psalm 83

(2 Chronicles 20:14)

Hezekiah

Psalm 76

(2 Chronicles 29:13)

Josiah

Psalm 81

(2 Chronicles 35:15)

Jeremiah

Psalm 79

(Nehemiah 11:22)

The Psalms Of The House Of Asaph

*The House of Asaph understood the secret of
the dwelling place of God*

■ God dwelleth in the heavens

Psalm 73:25, Psalm 76:8, Psalm 77:18, Psalm 80:14
Psalm 83:18

■ God dwelleth in the sanctuary

Psalm 74:7, Psalm 76:2, Psalm 78:60, Psalm 79:1
Psalm 80:1

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Two - The Pre-eminence Of Principle

■ 1 Chronicles 16:8-22

First a summons to render thanks (vs 8-11), an appeal to remember God's marvellous works (vs 12-14), to appreciate their covenant fellowship with God (vs 15-18), and to celebrate His integrity (vs 19-22).

■ 1 Chronicles 16:23-33

Then the psalm widens to call upon all nations to praise Him as the supreme Deity (vs 23-26), to pay homage to Him with proper offerings (vs 27-30), with all creation celebrating His sovereignty (vs 31-33).

■ 1 Chronicles 16:34-36

A final call to offer thanks and ascribe all praise.

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Two - The Pre-eminence Of Principle

- The songs of the House of Asaph reveal the genius of Hebrew poetry which lies in the rhythm of ideas rather than the rhythm of words or sounds. Their foundation psalm (**1 Chronicles 16:8-36**) is typical in showing **the pre-eminence of principle**.
- Through the psalm, is woven the theme of the divine presence (**1 Chronicles 16:11,27,29,30,33**) the *panim* of God, to explain the true meaning of the ark in their midst and its moral implications.
- Here is no vague notion of worship, but detailed and deeply thoughtful praise which is based upon **the pre-eminence of divine principle**.

The Psalms Of The House Of Asaph

- Throughout their history the House of Asaph held a special relationship with the ark of the divine presence. (**1 Chronicles 6:31,39, 1 Chronicles 15:14-17, 26-28, 1 Chronicles 16:1-6, 37, 2 Chronicles 5:7-14, 2 Chronicles 20:8-9,14,21, 2 Chronicles 35:1-4, 15-18**).
- Their family learned the secret of being so imbued with the majesty of God's power as to live constantly in His presence. This was the core value of their House throughout successive generations.
- For the House of Asaph the sanctuary was the place of the ark – the symbol of God's presence, and the recurring theme of their psalms (**Psalms 50:2-3, 73:17, 74:2-7, 76:1-7, 77:11-15, 78:60-69, 79:9-13, 80:1-3**).

The House Of Asaph

Study Three

The Spirit Of The House Of Asaph



The TwentyFour Courses

The kingdom of Christ has 24 elders closest to the throne who display aspects of the priests, the singers and the rulers

- **1 Chronicles 24:1-19**
24 courses of priests to execute the priestly office
- **1 Chronicles 24:20-31**
24 courses of Levites for the service of the house
- **1 Chronicles 25:1-31**
24 courses of singers to give thanks and to praise
- **1 Chronicles 26:1-19**
24 courses of porters to guard the holy sanctuary
- **1 Chronicles 27:1-15**
24 courses of rulers over both months and tribes

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Three - The Solemnity Of Worship

- After the first disastrous attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, all Israel knew the power of Him that “dwelleth between the cherubim”. By the flashing forth of the divine majesty in judgment, the LORD signified that mere feeling and enthusiasm in worship were not enough. His divine principles must be upheld, and the majesty of His holiness honoured by singing before Him in **the solemnity of worship**. (1 Chronicles 13:6-12).
- The splendour of the divine glory in approval was such an awe inspiring sight that the entire congregation were prostrated to the ground in humility (2 Chronicles 7:2-3, 2 Chronicles 20:18).

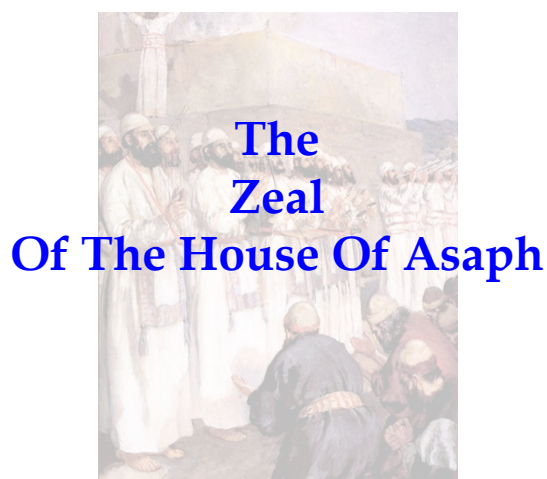
The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Three - The Solemnity Of Worship

- Even more so than the congregation, the singers themselves, imbued with thoughts which exalted the supremacy of God, sang their praises with gladness and yet with solemn reverence, worshipping with bowed heads even as they sang (2 Chronicles 29:30).
- The House of Asaph stood in awe of the presence of God in their midst (Psalm 50:2-3, 76:2,7,11, 77:13, 80:1). In their songs therefore, that which was familiar or casual, flippant or frivolous was to be avoided. Their music, however joyful, was never at the expense of the reverence and dignity appropriate in praising God in **the solemnity of worship** (Psalm 99:1-3).

The House Of Asaph

Study Four



The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Four – The Excellence Of Endeavour

- David's own standard of musicianship was one of excellence. "A cunning player on an harp" and "a man that can play well" are the scriptural epithet's used to describe the king's personal skill on his chosen instrument. (1 Samuel 16:16-17) He would certainly expect no less from the singers appointed by himself to lead the songs of the LORD on behalf of all Israel. Their singing was always characterised by the excellence of endeavour.
- The instruments were intended to lift up the voice in praise (1 Chronicles 15:16, 1 Chronicles 23:5), and in order to do this they needed to be played with passion and skill.

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Four – The Excellence Of Endeavour

- There was no casual spirit in the House of Asaph. To offer thanks and praise before God demanded their supreme effort in reaching the highest standard of excellence. Their skill only came through patient and incessant practice, and sprang from a mutual spirit of striving to give of their very best in praise. Indeed they were exempt from other temple duties in order to fulfil this task acceptably (**1 Chronicles 9:33, 23:30**).
- That they were both “instructed in the songs” and also “cunning” is the divine testimony concerning their efforts (**1 Chronicles 25:6-7**), an indication that their singing was always characterised by **the excellence of endeavour**.

The House Of Asaph

Study Five

The Faithfulness Of The House Of Asaph



The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Five - The Virtue Of Constancy

- The musical instruments used in the temple worship were specially made by David for praising the LORD. (1 Chronicles 23:5, 2 Chronicles 7:6). It is likely that he received the pattern for these by revelation, in common with all other instruments for service in the temple (1 Chronicles 28:11-14, 19), called therefore the 'musical instruments of God'. (1 Chronicles 16:42).
- Later revivals of the temple worship did not deviate from this standard, and the songs of the LORD were still sung with the instruments of David, the man of God (2 Chronicles 29:25-27, Nehemiah 12:36). Here was a demonstration of the virtue of constancy in their praise.

The Music Of The House Of Asaph

Principle Five - The Virtue Of Constancy

- In a similar fashion, the words of these songs were jealously preserved by the House of Asaph. The psalm originally delivered to them by David to sing before the ark (1 Chronicles 16:7-8,34) became the centre of their praise, and its simple majesty was undimmed by centuries of time (2 Chronicles 7:6, 2 Chronicles 20:21, Ezra 3:10-11).
- It is reasonable to assume that just as both instrument and word did not vary, so also the music remained unchanged throughout the centuries. Their songs and their music expressed the joy of eternal truths, and unceasingly proclaimed the virtue of constancy. They treasured the old, by guarding the ancient landmark.

The House Of Asaph

Study Six

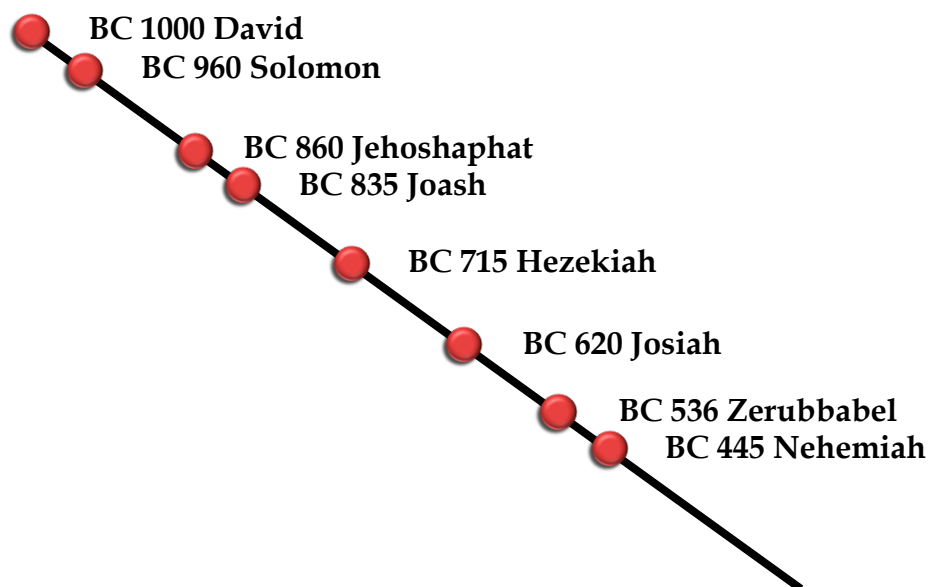
The Secret Of The House Of Asaph



With Cymbals, Psalteries And Harps

- **1 Chronicles 25:6** - "All these were under the hands of their father (Asaph) for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps".
- **2 Chronicles 5:12** - "Also the Levites the singers... of Asaph... and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps".
- **2 Chronicles 29:25** - "and he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps".
- **Nehemiah 12:27** - "they sought the Levites out of all their places... to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps".

The House Of Asaph | Family Of Faith



The House Of Asaph | Masters Of Music

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The Secret Of The House Of Asaph

- **1 Chronicles 16:8-11** - They were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of God manifestation.
- **Psalms 77:10-13** - They were deeply aware of the majesty of the divine presence.
- **1 Chronicles 25:6-7** - They were committed to the standard of excellence of endeavour.
- **1 Chronicles 23:27-30** - They were involved in the principle of thanks and praise every day.

The House Of Asaph & Daily Praise

- **1 Chronicles 9:33** - "And these are the singers... who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work **day and night**".
- **1 Chronicles 16:37** - "So he left there... Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark of God continually, as **every day's work** required".
- **1 Chronicles 23:27-30** - "the Levites were numbered... because their office was... to stand **every morning** to thank and praise the Lord, and **likewise at even**".
- **Nehemiah 11:22-23** - "of the sons of Asaph, the singers... it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for **every day**".

The Secret Of The House Of Asaph

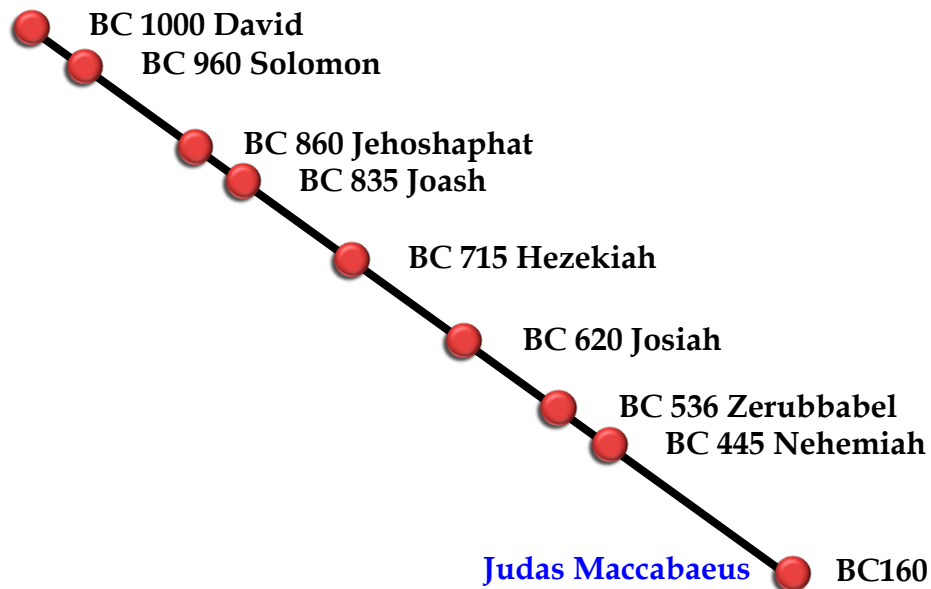
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- **1 Chronicles 23:27-30** - They were involved in the principle of thanks and praise every day.
- **2 Chronicles 5:12-13** - They were influenced by godly music to the heights of spiritual exaltation.
- **Psalms 78:1-7** - They were diligent in inculcating their principles into the next generation.
- **Ezra 3:10-11** - They were faithful in maintaining their standards with unswerving devotion.

The Singers With The Maccabees

- “they rose up betimes in the morning and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings which they had made... in the same was it dedicated with songs, **and harps, and lutes, and cymbals**. And all the people fell upon their faces worshipping and praising the God of heaven who had given them good success on this day”.
- Then Judas returned to spoil the tents where they got much riches, and they went home and sung a song of thanksgiving. And they praised the LORD in heaven, “**because he is good, because his mercy endureth for ever**. Thus Israel had a great deliverance on that day”.

1 Maccabees, Chapter 4

Timeline For The House Of Asaph



**“O give thanks unto the LORD;
for he is good;
for his mercy
endureth for ever”**

1 Chronicles 16:34