

1 & 2 CHRONICLES: *King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible*

House of Yahweh

Chronicles has a freshness and valor all its own.” The Hebrew title means “The Events of the Days” like a journal. These two books cover the same period of Hebrew history as described in 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, but from a priestly perspective. The theme centers on the worship of Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem.

First and Second Chronicles were originally a simple continuous Hebrew work that was divided as a matter of convenience by the Greek Old Testament translators of the *Septuagint* (*LXX*). The name “Chronicles” was penned by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate Bible (A.D. 385-405). He called it “Chronicles of the Entire Sacred History.”

Chronicles concentrates on King David and his successors in the land of Judah with only selected comments about the Northern Kingdom as it relates to the South. It is an interpretation of the history of Israel from a special religious point of view as it relates to the Covenant and the temple.

AUTHOR: is not stated in the books of Chronicles. According to Jewish Talmud, Ezra wrote “his book and Chronicles—the order of all generations down to himself.”

The author is called “The Chronicler” suggesting he was a historian and possibly a scribe, priest or Levite. He had access to temple archives and government records. Internal evidence also suggests the author may have also written the books of Ezra and Nehemiah because the language, literary style of all three works are similar. The first three verses of Ezra (1:1-3) are almost the same as the last two verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22, 23). In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra-Nehemiah is considered one book with Chronicles at the very end of the Hebrew Bible.

The content of these books suggests a priestly authorship because of the emphasis on the Jerusalem temple, priesthood, theocracy, covenant with David and Judea. The Chronicler was evidently someone looking back upon the captivity and had a close connection between Ezra and Nehemiah.

DATE: when Chronicles was written appears as Clyde Francisco suggest, “at a much later date than Kings.” It looks at Jewish history from the perspective of the post-Babylonian exiles who have returned to Jerusalem. The sixth generation following Zerubbabel are listed (1 Chron. 3:17-21) which would be about 400 B.C. as well as Persian coins (*darics*) in 1 Chron. 29:7.

The time covered is from Adam to the end of the Babylonian Exile at the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, who allowed the Jewish captives to return home to Judah. Cyrus’ decree is usually dated c. 538 B.C. Zerubbabel first returned to Jerusalem in 535 B.C. and the temple was completed in 516 B.C. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in 444 B.C.

Probably the best estimate for the date of writing of Chronicles is around 400 B.C. It is quite certain it was not compiled before 400 B.C.

PURPOSE: of the Chronicler was to encourage the despondent and discouraged workers who had returned to Jerusalem after the exile with Zerubbabel to repair the wall of Jerusalem and begin work on rebuilding the temple.

David is the central personality because of the covenant, the temple and the greater temple coming in the future. The purpose of Chronicles was the building and rebuilding of the temple of Yahweh. God’s dealings with Israel, Judah and David all relate to that central purpose. The master passion of David was to build the temple, but God denied him that privilege because he was a man of war so his son Solomon became the builder instead (1 Chron. 22:8).

Because of this emphasis on the temple and the Covenant, Chronicles has priestly views and overtones of the kingdom. The author’s one objective is to show how important the temple is in the life of the nation and

its people. The temple, like the old tabernacle, was the place where the God of the Covenant met with His chosen people. This truth was central to the life of the nation.

By contrast the Northern Kingdom set up two golden calves, worshipped idols and rebelled against Yahweh.

The temple symbolized the presence of Yahweh with His people. He is faithful to His chosen people and His covenants with them. “The Chronicler’s concern was to recount the history in such a way as to assure the people that Yahweh was ruling and to urge them on to full loyalty to Him,” writes La Sor, *et al*, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 633).

La Sor, Hubbard and Bush write: “The Chronicler longs for and seeks to contribute to a recovery of the glorious days of David and Solomon—not by reestablishment of the monarchy, but by a return to obedient worship. To a people stripped of kings and forced to obey Persian law, he preaches the word of hope: belief in the Lord and the message of His prophets that God would restore to Judah an epoch of glory akin to the nation’s golden age (2 Chron. 20:20)” (La Sor, *et al*, pp. 636-36).

The emphasis on the covenant of David would demonstrate the continuity between preexilic and postexilic history of Israel.

THEME: of Chronicles is the Jewish temple in Jerusalem with its worship, officials, the Levites, and the uniqueness of Yahweh (2 Chron. 2:5; 6:5; 20:6-7; 1 Chron. 17:21). And if the temple is the central theme, then worship of Yahweh is the dominant attitude in the books. Yahweh is worthy of our praise and adoration.

The key to the history of Israel is God’s covenant with David who was chosen of God to plan and prepare for the building of the temple by collecting money and supplies. The author brings together all the prominent facts regarding the temple and its central importance to God’s sovereign rule of the nation to accomplish His eternal purpose of redemption.

David is mentioned over 250 times in Chronicles and Jerusalem almost 250 times and Judah 225 times. It was God’s chosen place (2 Chron. 5-6), not Samaria in the North. It is rather hard to miss this emphasis. It is also hard to miss the lack of emphasis and dismissal of the Northern Kingdom with an almost total lack of interest except as it relates to the temple and its purpose in the nation (2 Chron. 10:19; 13:5). God met with His chosen people in the temple above the Mercy Seat (2 Chron. 6:19-7:3). A sub-theme is the great sovereign power of God to accomplish His purposes with His people (1 Chron. 29:11-12). There is no other God like Yahweh (1 Chron. 16:25-26; 17:20; 2 Chron. 6:14). The kings of the Northern Kingdom are almost completely left out because they rejected the temple worship in Jerusalem.

STYLE: The Chronicler repeatedly makes references to official records of kings and prophets. Any good historian uses “continuity and selectivity.” This Hebrew Chronicler is not a historian in the strict modern western sense. He sees Israel’s history full of spiritual and moral lessons. Therefore, he is not concerned much with the bare facts of Israel’s history as he is with their meaning for his day. La Sor, *et al*, says, “If all valid historical writing is interpretative, the Chronicler is highly interpretative” in order to accomplish his purpose. This is not to say Chronicles is not accurate as history.

The Chronicler uses what G. Von Rad calls, “Levitical Sermon” consisting of “snatches of the prophets, law or historical books as texts” to accomplish his goal. He includes “the entire corpus of prophetic writing.”

THE TEMPLE

In the books of Chronicles almost everything relates to the temple in Jerusalem. Three temples were built on the same place on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem covering a span of a thousand years. It was the symbolical dwelling place of God in the midst of His people.

During the forty-year journey through the wilderness Jehovah met with Israel in the Tabernacle. Later, the great ambition of King David was to build a temple for Yahweh, but he was forbidden because he was a man of war. He had blood on his hands. David purchased the hill-top in Jerusalem, which is now covered by the Mosque of Omar. The author of Kings gives us a detailed description of the construction of the temple in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon in 1 Kings 6-7 (c. 960 B.C). The temple was a magnificent building beyond our power to imagine. Scholars have attempted to build models of Solomon’s Temple. The cost would represent billions of U. S. dollars.

Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed Solomon’s Temple in 586 B.C. But even before then much of its glory had been torn away and paid as tribute to foreign conquerors who menaced Judah. Nothing has

survived from the first temple, but perhaps the stone wall above the Kidron Valley, on the east of the site and which Herod later incorporated into his walls.

The exiles in Babylon were encouraged by Ezekiel's vision of a new temple (Ezek. 40-43), however it was never built. The exiles who returned to Jerusalem after King Cyrus' decree around 538 B.C., with interruptions and delays, finally completed the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple in 516 B.C. Those who remembered the old temple wept because the new one was nothing in comparison to the glory of the old. The Holy of Holies was empty in the second temple since the Ark of the Covenant was no longer in existence. The Babylonians probably destroyed it in 586 B.C. when the temple and the city of Jerusalem were burned.

After the Babylonian Exile faithful servants rebuilt the temple and waited for the Messianic Age to come, but their hopes of a political restoration of Israel faded into the reality that there was not the slightest possibility of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. How then were the people in the post-exile in the fourth century B.C. to understand God's plan for His kingdom? This is where the Chronicler's divine view of the history of Israel in God's covenant with David gave hope to the people of his day. The genealogy in the first ten chapters of 1 Chronicles leads up to King David, and then chapters 11-29 focuses on the events in his rule as king, and then the building of the temple under Solomon's reign and the rebuilding of it by Zerubbabel (520-516 B.C.). Because the temple is completely rebuilt it is called Zerubbabel's Temple.

After 586 B.C. no Jewish king sat on the throne in Jerusalem. Only foreign powers ruled the land. Judea had been depopulated and barren for 70 years, but after the exile she was stable politically as a part of the Persian Empire and later the Greeks and Romans. For the next 400 years there was not the slightest possibility of restoring the Davidic kingdom. There was a short span of independence under the Maccabean's from 164-64 B.C., but this was not a Davidic rule.

Therefore, instead of having a king to rule over them, the Jews had a purified priesthood in whom Yahweh approved. Yahweh was again their King. The pre-exile priesthood was as immoral and corrupt as the kings and both led the nation to a spiritual collapse. The nation has moved from a theocracy to a monarchy and back to a theocracy. The postexilic Jews were living as a holy nation and it was during this time that their messianic hope and expectations grew. God's goal was not a political kingdom with nationalistic ambitions; it was spiritual.

The seventy years of Babylonian Exile purged the chosen people of idolatry. This is why there is the steady emphasis on the Mosaic covenant in the book. The nation could exist only as it yielded to the heavenly King (2 Chron. 20:20).

The Idumaeen king Herod renovated Zerubbabel's Temple to curry favor with his Jewish subjects who hated him. Most of the work on that temple was done between 19 and 9 B.C., however work continued until A.D. 64. The Romans completely destroyed Herod's Temple in A.D. 70. The Western Wall or "Wailing Wall" is still visible. Jesus visited the temple frequently in His day (Jn. 2:16-20).

Furthermore, Jesus is greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6) and He is the place where the LORD God meets with man. It is through the veil of His flesh that we enter into the holy presence of the LORD (Matt. 27:51). We can now go boldly before the throne of grace and have perfect access to God.

The emphasis in Chronicles is good for our day, too. He stresses the direct activity of God in the life of the nation. Battles are won or lost not according to a super-power's prowess or size or the size of opposing forces, but according to the LORD God's will, and, at times, His miraculous intervention (2 Chron. 13:15-18; 17:10; 20:22-25). It is the Chronicler's conviction that they won their battles in the strength of the LORD (Ex. 15; Ps. 2; 20; 21; Prov. 21:31). The writer of these two books has simply applied the principles announced in Deuteronomy 27-28 and tested in Judges, Samuel and Kings (La Sor, *et al*).

Chronicles is a "theology of hope" set against the despair and "apparent" failure of Zerubbabel to inaugurate a political messianic kingdom. In Chronicles Yahweh is seen electing, guiding and controlling the destiny of nations to accomplish His will. It is a divine commentary on the spiritual characteristics of David's dynasty. David was "a man after God's own heart"; however, his son Solomon and the kings that followed were not. God is sovereign in the affairs of nations (1 Chron. 29:11-12). He honors and blesses those who honor Him and judges those who reject Him. The importance of God's covenant with David to the whole history of Israel is seen in its ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Title: Introduction to 1 & 2 Chronicles

Series: [A Look at the Book](#)

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