

1 CHRONICLES

INTRODUCTION

Chronicles concludes the Old Testament period of history up to 400 B.C. when God left the people to do their own thing. At first glance, the two books of Chronicles appear to be repetitious. They treat the same historical period as the books of Samuel and Kings.

Well over half the material contained here is a duplication of information contained in previous Old Testament books. However, they review this information from a particular perspective and with a specific end in view, the justification for doing it will become obvious.

The books of Chronicles were written late in Old Testament history after the return from exile in Babylonia and were designed to impress the returnees from captivity with their spiritual heritage.

The author wanted these post-exile Jews to see themselves as the continuation of the David's kingdom. He wanted them to feel a strong allegiance to the temple, the priesthood, and the covenant. The sweeping historical scope of the material ranges all the way from Adam down to the return from Babylonian captivity.

The historical setting for writing Chronicles must take these facts into account.

1. Cyrus' proclamation of 536 B.C. allowed the Jews to return to their homeland.
2. Ezra returned to Jerusalem around 458 B.C. in the "seventh year of the king" Artaxerxes, ruler of Persia from 465 to 423 B.C.
3. Although the temple had been built in 520-515 B.C. the people were lax about their spiritual duties.
4. Under Nehemiah's political leadership (beginning in 445 B.C.), there existed a set of circumstances favorable to the writing of a book like Chronicles.

Chronicles is an effort to promote religious revival among the people returning from Babylon. It was important that they be reminded of their covenant relationship with the Lord. Although the temple had been rebuilt it was being neglected by the people. Religious revival could not occur apart from the restoration of the people's worship there.

Chronicles is not a repetition of the material in Kings and Samuel.

1. Kings and Samuel provided a political history from a prophetic point of view.
2. Chronicles is a religious history written from the priestly point of view.

Chronicles calls attention to the worship of the true God according to His revealed will and distinguishes His true people on the basis of their right worship. Deeds of public worship can never be allowed to replace a life on total devotion to the Lord, yet there can be no total devotion to God in a life which neglects or perverts the worship He has prescribed.

Pagan worship is subjective and arises from the worshiper himself, and is highly emotional.

Biblical worship originates in the object of worship rather than the subject.

1. Certain emotions (such as awe, love, fear) may be experienced in worship, but are not its essence.
2. God reveals Himself, prescribes the form and manner of the worship He desires, and expects His worshipers to conform to Divine requirements rather than tickle their own fancies.

Heaven must be served within the boundaries which have been prescribed. This truth has been almost forgotten among religious people of modern times. The origin of the Samaritans traces to the period in history when Chronicles was written. When Samaria fell to Assyria in 721 B.C., Sargon deported thousands of the Israelites and repopulated the land with Gentiles.

1. Intermarriage with Jews still there produced a racially, cultured, and religiously mixed people.

2. A tense relationship existed between them and the Jews who returned from Babylon.
3. The final breach occurred when the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim and initiated their own priesthood and worship.

Josiah was the last good king of Judah and reigned from 649 to 609 B.C. On the throne at eight, he began a religious revival at age 16. At Josiah's death, however, the people reverted to idolatry. The religious reformation was superficial and not of the heart.

Cyrus' edict of 536 B.C. allowed the Jews to end their captivity and return to Israel. Seventy years were spent in captivity to compensate for the Sabbatical years which God's people neglected to keep.

For a period of five hundred years the Hebrews disregarded the seventh year. Jeremiah had predicted that the remnant would spend seventy years in captivity. Isaiah had predicted that Cyrus, king of Persia, would free the Hebrew people. Two hundred years before Cyrus appeared he was named by Isaiah.

It may have been that Daniel acquainted Cyrus with God's purpose for His people. Cyrus published a decree releasing the Hebrews and fifty thousand returned to Judah under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

The second temple, Zerubbabel's temple, was finished in about 516 B.C. The Bible says in Numbers 1:18 "they declared their pedigrees." "Pedigrees" literally means "a crane's foot." The leg of the crane terminates in three distant branches or toes.

It is similar to the word we use for "family tree" and is translated or refers to a registration of ancestors. God made certain that the Hebrews could trace their ancestry, so that Christ's lineage would be traceable back to David. The writer of Chronicles wanted these Jews to see themselves as the continuation of David's kingdom. He wanted them to feel a strong allegiance to the temple, to the priesthood, and to the covenant.

The Holy Place (temple) and the Holy City (Jerusalem) were to be seen in a unique light; true worship is a necessary part of honoring the covenant the returnees have with God.

Chronicles looks to the re-establishment of God's people after captivity and return by reinforcing the role of the temple, territorial assignments, and civil service. Chronicles brings the student of Hebrew history to the vantage point from which he or she can look for the promised Savior.

Ezra, a priestly scribe, is believed to be the author of Chronicles and wrote this material in about 450-425 B.C.

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Chapters 1-9 deal with the genealogy from Adam to David. Chapters 10 -29 deal with the history of King David. The last chapter of 1 Samuel deals with the defeat of Israel and the deaths of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa. Saul seeing that he was defeated, took his own life after his sword-bearer refused to kill him.

King David's greatest enemy was the Philistines. The Philistines were war-like when the Hebrew people were ready to leave Egypt in Moses' day. The Philistines challenged the Hebrew's claim to their territory in Canaan.

Shamgar and Samson were champions of Israel's conflict with the Philistines who had threatened complete extinction. At the time of Saul there was a conflict between Israel and the Philistines. Saul was afraid of the Philistines. He could not relieve his people until David came and slew the giant.

This was a great victory for Israel, but for Saul it became a matter of humiliation. David was praised as a fearless leader and Saul was tolerated as a cowardly king. Saul spent the rest of his days trying to find a way to kill David.

God used the Philistines to chastise Saul and his people for a lack of faith. God was displeased with Saul. He had not utterly destroyed the Amalekites. Saul disqualified himself as king and God brought David to the throne in Israel.

Chapters 11-12 tell us of the reign of David. Once David had settled accounts with the rivals in the North and had all Israel under his leadership, he sought out a place for the capital of his kingdom. He chose Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was more centrally located. The city was set in a natural fortress of hills and it was very strategically elevated.

After David captured the city, he moved in, fortified the walls and established this as his capital. David then surrounded himself with some mighty men. David became commander-in-chief over the great army of Israel.

David wanted to build the nation of Israel on the solid foundation of seeking out and doing God's will. If Jerusalem was to be the capital, then David thought the center of worship should be located there also.

The Ark of the Covenant had been in the tabernacle at Shiloh, but the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant. Later, because of all the problems this sacred chest caused the Philistines, they moved it to the house of Abinadab in Keriath-jearim, a village east of Jerusalem.

David attempted to have the ark moved to Jerusalem. They built a new cart to carry the ark. Uzzah and Ahio were charged with managing the oxen and the cart with its precious cargo. It was a happy day but it abruptly ended the ceremonies when Uzzah died. It appeared that the ark was going to be toppled from the cart and Uzzah reached up to steady the ark and God struck him dead.

God was displeased with this exercise in moving the ark. The ark was to be moved by being placed on the shoulders of the Kohathite Levite priests. Uzzah was not a priest. A cart other than shoulders was used to move it.

From this incident we can learn of God's attitude towards those who would profane sacred things and disobey God. The ark was then left with Obed-edom, the Gittite, for three months and God blessed the house of Obed-edom.

In chapter 14, David forms an alliance with the Phoenician people. In return for grain and olive oil they provided David with building materials. Kingly quarters were built for David and his family. David saw the ark housed in a tent while he lived in a house of cedar. So the temple idea was born.

There was a Gentile contribution to the kingdom of God. It looked ahead to that day when Gentiles would receive the "Bread of Life" from the true Israel.

David had eight wives, counting Bathsheba.

Trouble in David's household started when Amnon raped his sister and Absalom killed him. Amnon was in line to be the next king and now Absalom

was in line but he rebelled against his father. Later when Absalom was hung by the hair of his head from the limb of a tree, Joab killed him.

Adonijah also rebelled against David as he sought to place himself on the throne. Solomon ordered Benaiah to put Adonijah to death. Just prior to his death, David placed Solomon on the throne.

In chapters 15 and 16 David prepares for and brings the ark to Jerusalem where it is placed in a tent.

1 Chronicles 16:23-26 Israel had a work to do. She must make God known to the people of the world and this is true of us today. In large measure she failed in this task.

The nations are to have the same attitude of worship as Israel demonstrated. These nations were to sing to God, declare His glory, reverence Him as Creator, ascribe glory to Him, bring an offering, worship in holy order, trembling in His presence, and joyfully accepting God as King.

David's desire to build a temple for God was denied. David was a man of great bloodshed. As a result of God's denial and God commissioning Solomon to build it larger, David begin to make plans for the temple's construction. He consolidated the nation's strength, and took an unauthorized census. David also prepared the necessary building materials, organized the priests and Levites, and appointed other officials for the people.

At the close of David's life, he charges Solomon with the awesome responsibility of building God's house and ruling as King of Israel. David charged Solomon to come to know God. Let God be real to you. Be intimately acquainted with Him.