

1 Chronicles

Message

The Book(s) of Chronicles was written to encourage the faithful remnant who had returned to the Promised Land after the Babylonian exile: (1) to reestablish Israel's national and spiritual pride by reinstating proper Yahweh-worship under the leadership of the Levites, (2) to make the central passion in David's life, namely, *the building of the temple*, the central passion in their own lives, and (3) to recognize the supreme importance of obedience to God in every area of life, individually and nationally.¹



Title

The ancient Hebrew title of the Book of Chronicles was *dibre hayyamim*, “the words (affairs, events, accounts, or chronicles) of the days.” This may be rendered literally “the events of the times,” or as in 1 Chronicles 27:24, “the accounts of the chronicles.”² The Septuagint translators titled the book “Things Omitted,” suggesting that the Book(s) of Chronicles provided a record of material left out of the previously inspired records of Israel's history; namely the books of Samuel and Kings. The English title “Chronicles” comes from the church father Jerome, who suggested that the title reflects a Chronicle of the whole of Israel's sacred history. As were the books of Samuel and Kings, so too Chronicles was originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. The translators of the Greek Septuagint version of the Hebrew Old Testament (ca. 250 B.C.) were responsible for dividing the single Book of Chronicles into the two separate books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. It is believed that scribes divided these long books (Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles) into two separate volumes to make them easier for copyists, publishers, and readers to handle.”³

¹The Chronicler's emphasis on the priesthood, temple, and King David would have been a source of great encouragement to the faithful remnant of postexilic Judah (Merrill, “1 Chronicles,” in *BKC*, 591). Tom Constable writes, “**The central subject of 1 and 2 Chronicles is the temple of God.** Chronicles was composed at the end of the Babylonian exile to encourage the Israelites to reestablish Israel's national life in the Promised Land. In view of this purpose the Northern Kingdom of Israel was of little interest to the writer. Judah is the kingdom in view, and David [1 Chronicles and Solomon 2 Chronicles] is the king in view” (“1 and 2 Chronicles” [unpublished class notes in course # 303 Old Testament History II, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1996], 6-7).

²Roy B. Zuck, “1 and 2 Chronicles” (unpublished class notes in course # 303 Old Testament History II, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1995), 2.

³The major reason for dividing these longer books was due to the fact that the Hebrew text uses only consonants (vowels are implied) whereas in Greek both consonants and vowels are written. As a result the Greek translation of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles came to be divided somewhat equally over two scrolls.

Author

Although the author of Chronicles(s) is anonymous, Jewish tradition suggests that Ezra wrote the book of Chronicles. While scholars generally agree that the works uniformity of style, flavor, and viewpoint necessitate a single author, they do not agree on the identity of that author. The Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 15a) states that Ezra the scribe was the Chronicler and there is no good reason to depart from this tradition. While it cannot be stated with certainty that Ezra was indeed the author/compiler, it would be fitting for him to have assumed that role since he was a scribe (Ezra 7:6; 11; Neh 12:36) and a priest (Ezra 7:11; Neh 12:26), and thus would have been interested in presenting a religious history of his people from a priestly point of view.⁴ Archer writes the following eloquent words in support of Ezra's authorship,

As the chief architect of the spiritual and moral revival of the Second Commonwealth, he [Ezra] would have had every incentive to produce a historical survey of this sort. As a Levite from the priestly line, his viewpoint would have been in perfect agreement with that of the author of this work.

William F. Albright, who also favors Ezra as the author/compiler of Chronicles and Ezra, shows how Chronicles bears a marked resemblance to the book of Ezra in several crucial ways: (1) Hebrew tradition affirms that Ezra wrote Chronicles as well as Ezra; (2) both books to both were written about 450 B.C.; (3) both record extensive genealogies; (4) both place emphasis on temple practices and worship; and (5) both express devotion to the law of Moses. Another support for Ezra as the author/compiler is seen in comparing the closing verses of Chronicles (2 Chr 36:22-23) which are repeated as the opening verses of Ezra (Ezra 1:1-2).⁵ Ezra serves as the historical counterpart to Chronicles as he describes Jewish history from the decree of Cyrus (which concluded Chronicles, and has a firmly established date of 538 B.C.) down to 457 B.C. According to all of these facts, it may be implied that the books of Ezra and Chronicles were originally one consecutive history, composed by a single author, Ezra the scribe, in about 450 B.C.

Date of Composition

Nearly all conservative scholars agree, based on internal evidence derived from the book itself, that Chronicles must have been written some time after 538 B.C. Most of these would place it within Ezra's lifetime (ca. 450-400 B.C.).⁶ According to 1 Chronicles 6:15 and 9:1, which refer to Judah being carried away into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C., and 2 Chronicles 36:22, which refers to the decree issued by Cyrus the King of Persia in 538 B.C. allowing the Judean captives to return to their own land of Israel, the Book(s) of Chronicles must have been written at some time later than this date of 538 B.C. In addition, the similarity between the two lists of names of those Jews who

⁴Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 405.

⁵Albright, as referenced by J. Barton Payne, "1 Chronicles," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 367.

⁶Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 405; Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Chronicles," in *BKC*, 589; Payne, "1 Chronicles," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 367; J. Barton Payne, "1 Chronicles," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 304-7; Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 413.

returned to Judah from the Babylonian captivity that are recorded in 1 Chronicles 9:2-44 and Nehemiah 11:3-32 would also demand a date of composition of Chronicles some time after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. As mentioned above, the close affinity between Chronicles and Ezra suggests that both books were written by a single author, possibly Ezra the scribe, say between 450–420 B.C.

Sources Used
in Composition

It is evident that the author/compiler of Chronicles used various historical sources in the process of compiling his work, including official records and prophetic writings. The following list of historical sources are referenced by the Chronicler in the composition of his work:

Official Records

<u>Record</u>	<u>Reference</u>
1. The Book of the Kings of Israel	1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr 20:34
2. The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel	2 Chr 16:11; 25:26; 28:26
3. The Book of the Annals of King David	1 Chr 27:24
4. The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah	2 Chr 27:7; 35:27; 36:8
5. The Annals of the Kings of Israel	2 Chr 33:18
6. The Annotations of the Book of the Kings	2 Chr 24:27
7. The Directions written by David king of Israel and by his son Solomon	2 Chr 35:4

Prophetic Writings

<u>Record</u>	<u>Reference</u>
1. The Records of Samuel the seer	1 Chr 29:29
2. The Records of Nathan the Prophet	1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29
3. The Records of Gad the seer	1 Chr 29:29
4. The Visions of Iddo the seer	2 Chr 9:29; 12:15
5. The Records of Shemaiah the prophet	2 Chr 12:15
6. The Annotations of the prophet Iddo	2 Chr 13:22
7. The Annals of Jehu . . . recorded in the Book of the kings of Israel	2 Chr 20:34
8. The Acts of Uzziah written by the prophet Isaiah	2 Chr 26:22
9. The Vision of Isaiah the prophet	2 Chr 32:32
10. The records of the Seers	2 Chr 33:19

* Note: it is possible that some of the above titles may refer to the same works.

While the Chronicler is seen to have used numerous sources in compiling his history of Israel, his primary reference work was “The book of the kings of Judah and Israel” (1 Chr 9:1; 2 Chr 16:11; 20:34; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 35:27; 36:8). However, as Thompson writes “the fact that the Chronicler used Samuel-Kings as a source for his work does not mean that he slavishly followed it. “Chronicles is not an exposition of Samuel-Kings, nor does it have the same structure. “It is a separate work with an independent purpose.”⁷ In addition, many scholars feel that because of the extra-biblical additions of genealogies, wars, and many other details not contained in our canonical books, that the Chronicler must have had at his disposal a larger court record, now lost, from which he also drew and incorporated information pertinent to his inspired historical development.⁸

Historical Background

Chronicles covers a broader period of history than any other Old Testament book. It commences with Adam (1 Chr 1:1) and ends with the decree of Cyrus of Persia in 538 B.C. (2 Chr 36:23) allowing captive Jews to return to their homeland of Israel. The extended period from Adam to the death of King Saul is reviewed through a selective genealogical registry of Israel’s ancestors (1:1–9:44). The Chronicler concentrates on emphasizing the chosen lineage of David and his descendants, of which all the kings of Judah and their ancestors form the vital link to Messiah, David’s greater Son and Savior Jesus Christ (2:1–8:10). In His elective purposes God first chose Abraham, the father of His elect nation, Israel—and her supreme king, David—from among all the nations on the earth. So David and Judah serve as the focal points of 1 and 2 Chronicles. Concerning the actual period of history addressed in the Chronicles account Walton and Hill write the following:

The actual history addressed in Chronicles spans the Hebrew united kingdom from the close King Saul’s reign to the Babylonian captivity of Judah (ca. 1020–586 B.C.) The accounts of David’s and Solomon’s kingships are focused on events and figures associated with the ark of the covenant and the construction and dedication of Yahweh’s temple. The Chronicler’s history of the divided kingdoms virtually ignores the northern sides. The book of Chronicles concludes with the same emphasis on Yahweh’s temple, as expressed in the edict of Cyrus, king of Persia, permitting the return of the Hebrew exiles to Palestine to rebuild the edifice [temple] (ca. 538 B.C.; cf. 2 Chr 36:22-23).⁹

Placement of Chronicles in the Hebrew Canon. While Chronicles covers the same period of history as Kings, it is not placed in the same section as Kings in the Hebrew Bible, mainly in the second division called the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) within the collection known as the *Former Prophets*. Instead, Chronicles is the last book listed in the Hebrew Bible, included in the third division called the Writings (*Kethuvim*), appearing last in the collection known as the *Historical Books*. This suggests that the early Jews looked upon Chronicles as very distinct from Kings, despite the similar historical reporting.

⁷J. A. Thompson, “1 and 2 Chronicles,” *New American Commentary*, 24.

⁸Payne, “1 Chronicles,” in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 368.

⁹Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 218.

Placement of Chronicles in the Protestant Old Testament Arrangement. In the English Bible 1 and 2 Chronicles appears immediately after the Books of Kings. The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, like 1 and 2 Kings are located in the second division of the English Bible's fourfold arrangement, in the collection known as the *Books of History*.

Theme and Purpose

The Book(s) of Chronicles stress two major themes: the temple and the Davidic Kingdom. The selective record presented in Chronicles with its omissions and additions serve the Chronicler's purpose of calling attention to the history and restoration of the temple and the continuity of the Davidic Kingdom of Judah. Writing along these lines, Merrill suggests that "the twin emphases of 1 and 2 Chronicles—on David as king and on the priesthood as a royal function with messianic implications—are central to a theological understanding of these books."¹⁰

Commenting on the overall purpose of Chronicles Archer writes the following:

The purpose of these two volumes [1 and 2 Chronicles] is to review the history of Israel from the dawn of the human race to the Babylonian captivity and Cyrus' edict of restoration. This review is composed with a very definite purpose in mind, to give to the Jews of the Second Commonwealth the true spiritual foundations of their theocracy as the covenant people of Jehovah. This historian's purpose is to show that the true glory of the Hebrew nation was found in its covenant relationship to God, as safeguarded by the prescribed forms of worship in the temple and administered by the divinely ordained priesthood under the protection of the divinely authorized dynasty of David. Always the emphasis is upon that which is sound and valid in Israel's past as furnishing a reliable basis for the task of reconstruction which lay ahead. Great stress is placed upon the rich heritage of Israel and its unbroken connection with the patriarchal beginnings (hence the prominence accorded to genealogical lists).¹¹

The chart below is supplied in an attempt to highlight some of the differences in emphases between the historical Books of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles:

Contrasts Between Samuel and Kings and Chronicles	
<i>Samuel and Kings</i>	<i>Chronicles</i>
Civil	Religious
Political	Levitical
Prophetic	Priestly
Throne	Temple
Wars prominent	Wars less prominent

¹⁰Merrill, "1 Chronicles," in *BKC*, 590.

Excludes the genealogies	Includes the genealogies
Includes many sins of the kings	Excludes many sins of the kings, i.e., David's adultery and murder, and Solomon's idolatry
Records the history of both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom	Records the history of only the Southern Kingdom (Davidic)
Indictment of the two nations sins	Encouragement of the remnant

Theological Context:

1 and 2 Chronicles *function as a divine commentary on Israel's history* concerning the function of the theocracy in Israel. God's direct activity, patterns of retribution, temple components, etc. all seek to demonstrate how Israel was a theocracy and a true covenant community of Yahweh. This is true despite sin, the separation of the kingdoms, the disappearance of the northern tribes, the destruction of the southern tribes, and the eventual return of only a small group of Jews to Jerusalem (49,897, see Ezra 2:64-65).

Since the Chronicler's primary purpose in writing was to encourage the Israelite's returning from captivity that God was true to His promises, he chose to focus on the elective purposes of God in choosing Israel, and David her supreme king, from among all the nations on the earth. **The emphasis throughout the Book(s) of Chronicles is upon God's choice of David and the outworking of His eternal promises to David and his posterity as contained in the Davidic Covenant** (2 Sam 7:8-16; Ps 89). God's covenant promises to David were still in force—in spite of the sins of His rebellious people and the captivity they had endured. Israel's message of future hope rested in the restoration and continuance of the Davidic dynasty. It was through David's posterity that God promised to someday send David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Outline

Any outline of 1 and 2 Chronicles must consider the fact that these two books were originally one scroll in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, since the original material presented the historical record in one unbroken account, any attempt to outline these two books must of necessity reflect a single, continuous, and unified presentation of the progressive development of the argument as recorded in the original Book of Chronicles.

The following fourfold outline reflecting the Davidic emphasis for the Book(s) of Chronicles will be followed in this study:

I. Tracing the Royal Ancestry of David: Genealogies from Adam to David 1 Chronicles 1:1–9:44

¹¹Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 404.

II. The Reign of David 1 Chronicles 10:1–29:30

[III.] I. The Reign of Solomon 2 Chronicles 1:1–9:31

[IV.] II. The Reigns' of the Kings of the Davidic Dynasty 2 Chronicles 10:1–36:23

Outline of 1 Chronicles

I. Tracing the Royal Ancestry of David: Genealogies from Adam to David 1:1–9:44

A. Patriarchal Genealogies 1:1-54

1. Genealogy of **Adam to Abraham** 1:1-27
2. Genealogy of **Abraham to Jacob** 1:28-54

B. Genealogy of Judah: **Jacob to David** 2:1-55

1. Genealogy of the sons of Israel 2:1-2
2. Genealogy of the sons of Judah 2:2-4

C. Genealogy of David: **David to the Captivity** 3:1-24

D. Genealogy of Remaining Sons of Israel (Jacob) 4:24–8:40

1. Genealogy of the sons of Simeon 4:24-43
2. Genealogy of the sons of Reuben 5:1-10
3. Genealogy of the sons of Gad 5:11-17
4. Genealogy of the Transjordan tribes 5:18-26
5. Genealogy of the sons of Levi 6:1-81
 - a. The sons of Levi 6:1-30
 - b. The groups and land assignments of the Levites 6:31-81
6. Genealogy of the sons of Issachar 7:1-5
7. Genealogy of the sons of Benjamin 7:6-12
8. Genealogy of the sons of Naphtali 7:13

9. Genealogy of the sons of the half tribe of Manasseh 7:14-19
 10. Genealogy of the sons of Ephraim 7:20-29
 11. Genealogy of the sons of Asher 7:30-40
 12. Genealogy of the sons of Benjamin expanded 8:1-40
- E. Registry of Jerusalem's Returning Remnant 9:1-44
1. The registry of Jerusalem's Inhabitants 9:1-34
 2. Genealogy of Saul (cf. 8:29-40) 9:35-44

II. The Reign of David 10:1–29:30

- A. David's Rise to Power 10:1–13:14
1. The death of King Saul 10:1-14
 2. David's accession as king 11:1-9
 - a. David's anointing at Hebron 11:1-3
 - b. David's capture of Jerusalem by Joab's mighty deed 11:4-9
 3. David's mighty men 11:10–12:40
 4. David's attempt to relocate the ark in Jerusalem 13:1-14
 - a. The removal of the ark from Kiriath-jearim 13:1-12
 - b. The remaining of the ark in Obed-edom's house 13:12-14
 - 1) David's fear of God 13:12
 - 2) David's installing the ark in the house of Obed-edom 13:13-14
- B. David's Rule Established 14:1–22:1
1. David's victories over the Philistines 14:1-14
 2. David brings the ark to Jerusalem 15:1–16:43
 - a. David's preparations 15:1-25
 - 1) The erecting of a tabernacle 15:1
 - 2) The instructions for the Levites to carry the ark 15:2

- 3) The assembling of the people, priests, and Levites 15:3-15
 - 4) The appointment of the singers and instrumentalists 15:16-25
 - b. David's procession 15:26-29
 - 1) The response of the Levites for God's helping them 15:26
 - 2) The rejoicing of the procession 15:17-28
 - 3) The reaction of Michal against David's display 15:29
 - c. David's placement of the ark in Jerusalem 16:1-16:6
 - 1) David's offerings 16:1-3
 - 2) David's official choir 16:4-6
 - d. David's provision for the continual worship of Yahweh 16:7-43
 - 1) David's Psalm of thanksgiving 16:7-36
 - 2) David's placing of permanent ministers before the Lord 16:37-43
3. David's request to build God a temple: *the Davidic Covenant* 17:1-27
 - a. David's desire to build God a house (temple) 17:1-2
 - b. Nathan delivers God's promise to build David a house (dynasty) 17:3-15
 - c. David's declaration of praise to God 17:16-27

4. David's rule extended through military conquests 18:1–20:8
 - a. David's initial military conquests and administration 18:1-17

 - b. David's royal administration 18:14-17

 - c. David's insult by and military conquest of the Ammonites 19:1–20:3

5. David's men defeat the Philistines and their remaining giants 20:4-8

6. David's sinful census, and God's punishment and provision for deliverance 21:1–22:1
 - a. David's sin in numbering the people 21:1-6
 - b. God's anger and David's confession 21:7-8
 - c. God's message to David through Gad of three possible punishments 21:9-12
 - d. David's plea for mercy and God's ensuing pestilence 21:13-15
 - e. David's prayer for the people and God's gracious deliverance 21:16–22:1
 - 1) David prays for God to spare His innocent people 21:16-17
 - 2) God instructs David to build an altar on Ornan's threshing floor 21:18-27
 - a) David's procurement of Ornan's threshing floor 21:18-25
 - b) David's preparation of an altar on Ornan's threshing floor 21:26a

- c) David's sacrifices were consumed by God from heaven 21:26b
 - d) David's obedience brought an end to God's pestilence 21:27
- 3) David establishes his altar on Ornan's threshing floor as the official sight for sacrificing before the Lord 21:28–22:1
- C. David's Preparations for Solomonic Succession 22:2–29:22a
- 1. David's preparations for the temple 22:2-19

 - 2. David's preparation of religious and political personnel 23:1-27:34
 - a. David's appointment of Solomon as his successor 23:1
 - b. David's appointment and organization of religious personnel 23:2–26:32
 - c. David's appointment of civil personnel 27:1-34

 - 3. David's parting words to the people and to Solomon 28:1-29:22a
- D. Solomon's Succession to the Throne and David's Death 29:22b-30
- 1. Solomon's ascension to David's throne 19:22b-25

 - 2. David's death 19:26-30