

The Book of Chronicles (1 & 2 Chronicles)

God's people are often in need of encouragement to believe God's promises. In times of distress it is hard to maintain confidence about the future. As the darkness of judgment had grown ever thicker as a result of the Assyrian and then the Babylonian captivities it became increasingly difficult for Israel to believe in the coming of the blessed kingdom envisioned in their Scriptures. Even though many captives had returned and the temple had been rebuilt, Israel was still without a king and under foreign domination. What hope was there for Israel as an independent kingdom among the nations? Chronicles addresses that question by focusing the post-exilic community on the relationship between king and temple as God had established and intertwined them. Because Yahweh's covenant with David was still in force, the temple's presence offered great hope for the future.

Authorship

The existence of Chronicles as one book is without much debate, the division into two occurring in conjunction with its translation into Greek. Jewish tradition holds that Ezra wrote the genealogies up to his time and that Nehemiah wrote the rest (*B. Bat.* 15a). The book itself gives no definite information as to who the author might have been. The large number of sources mentioned should not be taken as indicating that the book is merely a stitch work. Though large portions of Kings are quoted almost verbatim there is clearly a skillful adaptation of this material into a thematic unity. "Compiler" may be an accurate term from one standpoint. However, "author" is not an incorrect designation in light of the theological purpose that is determinable from the overall structure. The fact

that some later genealogical information may have been added does not argue against unity of authorship since the Holy Spirit is the controlling factor of authorial intent.¹

Date

The last dated event of Chronicles is Cyrus's decree of 538 B.C., which released Israel from its exile in Babylon. Additional information for dating comes from the genealogy of David (1 Chr 3:1–24), which stretches to Anani. It would appear that this is the eighth generation from Jehoiachin, c. 400 B.C., though some take this list to be contemporaneous rather than successive. The probable date, allowing for some later genealogical editing, is 450 B.C. to 400 B.C.²

Historical Setting

Chronicles references virtually the whole Old Testament, that is, from Adam to the post-exilic restoration period associated with Ezra and Nehemiah. However, the book primarily has to do with the kingdom of Israel—its decline and judgment and the people's subsequent restoration to their homeland. Chronicles abbreviates much of the information found in Samuel and Kings, assuming that the readership is familiar with those narratives.

Original Readers

Chronicles is a theological treatment of the history of the Davidic monarchy written for the benefit of the second or third post-exilic generation. This was the community living during and immediately after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, the

¹ For a discussion of authorship see Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 170-72.

² See Eugene H. Merrill, *1,2 Chronicles* in Bible Study Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter Books, Zondervan Publishing Co., 1988), 11-12.

message of this book would have been directly applicable to every generation until Christ, since they all needed a divine perspective on the relationship of the defunct monarchy to their nationhood and temple worship.

Occasion

The previously unimaginable crushing of Judah, accompanied by the destruction of Yahweh's throne city and house had plunged the nation into a crisis of epic proportions. What had happened to the Lord's nationalistic promises? Hope had been fostered by ministries such as Ezekiel's and several groups of exiles had returned to the land and reestablished a worshipping community. The temple had been rebuilt. However, what had not been renewed was the rule of the house of David. How were they to think about Israel's current and future place among the nations? What had become of the promises to Abraham and David? How would they recognize the promised son of David who would lead Israel back to ascendancy among the nations? These type of questions are what must have prompted the writing of Chronicles.³

Special Issues

Relationship to Samuel and Kings. The fact that Chronicles parallels the historical narrative treatment of the material in Samuel and Kings coupled with the fact that it quotes verbatim large segments of the same has produced an Old Testament "synoptic problem." The Greek title *Paraleipomenon*, meaning "things omitted, left over," seems to indicate that it is a supplement to Samuel-Kings. Modern critical

³ For discussions of the purpose and message of Chronicles see *ibid.*, 12–15. See also Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of Chronicles," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, Roy B. Zuck, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 157-87; and Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary* in Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Series (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 45-65.

scholarship has indeed questioned its historical accuracy when compared to Kings and thereby minimized its contribution to the Canon. However, recent study has gone a long way toward properly evaluating the author's literary and theological methods with the result that its canonical usefulness has been greatly restored. To be sure Chronicles depends upon various written sources that are old and far ranging, the major ones being Samuel and Kings. The proper approach to the interpretation of Chronicles against the backdrop of the history of Samuel-Kings is to not judge it upon the basis of some derived historiography of the previous writers, but rather to ask why the author selected the materials he did and how he used them to further his theological purpose. This must be done on the basis of what the text of Chronicles itself reveals. It will be discovered that both Kings and Chronicles have their own unique, though not entirely separate, emphases and message.⁴

The Genealogies. For most modern readers the nine chapters of genealogical listings are "things to be omitted." However, they form an important part of the Chronicler's message. First, the genealogies speak to the crisis of identity that the post-exilic community was experiencing. Selman notes that "the sense of belonging and of continuity which [the genealogies] conveyed were clearly gospel or good news as far as the author was concerned. They show that the Chronicler's generation had not after all been cast off from their historical, geographical, and spiritual moorings. If they would only look back, look around, and look up, they would see that they still belonged to

⁴ On the Chronicler's use of sources and the related issues of his hermeneutics and exegetical techniques see Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 645-53 and David M. Howard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), 238-49.

‘Israel’, and that their present predicament was not hopeless.”⁵ Secondly, it must be emphasized that the genealogies do not merely link the exiles to their Jewish ancestors but also to the whole human race as the channels of worldwide blessing that God had determined to bring through the descendants of Abraham (Gen 12:1–3).⁶ Thirdly, the genealogies are structured so as to introduce the book’s theological center, namely, the Davidic dynasty which Yahweh had established by covenant.⁷ The genealogies can only be appreciated as they are understood in light of the message of the book as a whole.

Message

Even though the kings of the Davidic dynasty varied greatly in their faithfulness, as revealed by their relationship to the temple and its worship, Yahweh remains loyal to His covenant, thus inspiring hope in the eventual advent of a king who will respect and support Yahweh’s temple and Torah.

Outline

	<u>1 Chronicles</u>
I. Genealogies: The Chronicler displays Yahweh’s elective strategies in providing for the house (dynasty) of David and the house (temple) of His presence.	1:1—9:44
A. Abraham is selected out of all humanity to become the progenitor of the kingdom of Israel.	1:1—54
1. Descent is traced from Adam to Abraham.	1:1—28
2. Descent is traced from Abraham to Israel.	1:29—37
3. Descendants of Abraham’s neighbors are traced.	1:38—54
a. The family of Seir is traced.	1:38—42
b. The royal dynasty of Edom is traced.	1:43—54
B. Judah is selected out of all the tribes of Israel from which to establish a house (dynasty) to rule over God’s kingdom.	2:1—3:24
1. David is selected as king from Judah.	2:1—55
2. David’s dynasty is traced to beyond the exile.	3:1—24

⁵ Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 85-6.

⁶ Cf. Merrill, “Theology of Chronicles,” 165.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-70.

- C. Levi is emphasized for its special service to the house of Yahweh. 4:1—7:40
1. Tribes of the south and of transjordan are traced. 4:1—5:26
 - a. The family of Judah is traced. 4:1—23
 - b. The family of Simeon is traced. 4:24—43
 - c. The family of Reuben is traced. 5:1—10
 - d. The family of Gad is traced. 5:11—22
 - e. The family of Half-Manasseh East is traced. 5:23—26
 2. The tribe of Levi is traced. 6:1—81
 - a. The family of Levi is traced. 6:1—30
 - b. The musicians appointed by David are listed. 6:31—48
 - c. The Aaronic priests are listed. 6:49—60
 - 1) According to their duties at the sanctuary. 6:49—53
 - 2) According to the cities of their habitation. 6:54—60
 - d. The cities of the rest of the Levites are listed. 6:61—81
 3. The tribes of the north and Benjamin are traced. 7:1—40
 - a. The family of Issachar is traced. 7:1—5
 - b. The family of Benjamin is traced. 7:6—12
 - c. The family of Naphtali is traced. 7:13
 - d. The family of Half-Manasseh West is traced. 7:14—19
 - e. The family of Ephraim is traced. 7:20—29
 - f. The family of Asher is traced. 7:30—40
- D. Saul is associated with the captivity of Israel. 8:1—9:44
1. The family tree of Saul is traced. 8:1—40
 2. The first inhabitants of the land are listed. 9:1—34
 3. The family tree of Saul is reviewed. 9:35—44
- II. David's Kingship: David's response to Yahweh's covenant promises becomes a model for the work and worship of the ideal king. 10:1—29:30
- A. David secures the kingdom and establishes a place for worship. 10:1—16:43
1. David secures the kingdom over all Israel at Hebron. 10:1—12:40
 - a. Saul forfeits the kingdom through unfaithfulness. 10:1—14
 - b. Introductory summary: David secured the kingdom by Yahweh's word and power. 11:1—9
 - 1) He was anointed by all Israel at Hebron. 11:1—3
 - 2) He secured Jerusalem and became great. 11:4—9
 - c. David's mighty men agreed to make him king. 11:10—47
 - d. David's army agreed to make him king. 12:1—37
 - e. Concluding summary: All Israel made David king. 12:38—40
 2. David establishes Jerusalem as the center for Israel's worship. 13:1—16:43
 - a. He fails in his attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem. 13:1—14
 - b. He is blessed in fruitfulness as the king. 14:1—17
 - c. He succeeds in his conflict with the Philistines. 14:8—17
 - d. He succeeds in bringing the ark to Jerusalem. 15:1—43
 - 1) He proceeds according to Yahweh's word. 15:1—15
 - 2) He appoints makers of music for the occasion. 15:16—24
 - 3) He leads the ark joyfully as a priest of Yahweh. 15:25—29
 - 4) He sacrifices in celebration of the ark's presence. 16:1—3

- 5) He appoints Levites to lead in worship, providing a psalm of praise for the occasion. 16:4–36
- e. He appoints officials for continual worship before the ark. 16:37–43
- B. David receives a covenant and devotes himself to its full realization. 17:1—29:25
 - 1. David receives a covenant and confirmation of its certainty. 17:1—21:30
 - a. Yahweh enters into covenant with David with near and distant promises. 17:1–27
 - 1) David expresses his intent to build Yahweh a house. 17:1–2
 - 2) Yahweh promises instead to build David a house. 17:3–15
 - a) He had not commanded a house to be built. 17:3–6
 - b) He had chosen David to lead Israel. 17:7–10a
 - c) He would build a house (dynasty) for David and David’s son would build a house for Him. 17:10b–15
 - 3) David prays for the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promises. 17:16–27
 - b. Yahweh confirms the certainty of his promises by giving David success over his enemies and a great name. 18:1—20:8
 - 1) Yahweh preserved David before his enemies. 18:1–13
 - 2) Yahweh made David ruler over all Israel. 18:14–17
 - 3) Yahweh gave David power over the Ammonites and Syrians and caused them to be at peace with Israel. 19:1—20:3
 - 4) Yahweh gave David victory over Philistine giants. 20:4–8
 - c. Yahweh forgives David for violating Torah, thus preserving the integrity of His dynastic covenant. 21:1–30
 - 1) David sins in numbering Israel, thus incurring divine wrath. 21:1–7
 - 2) David confesses his sin and chooses his punishment. 21:8–13
 - 3) Yahweh relents in his judgment against Jerusalem at the intercession of David. 21:14–30
 - 2. David rehearses the covenant to Solomon and prepares for his son’s building of the temple. 22:1—27:34
 - a. David demonstrates his commitment to the temple’s construction. 22:1–19
 - 1) He made material preparations for building. 22:1–5
 - 2) He prepares Solomon for the task of building. 22:6–16
 - a) He reminds Solomon of Yahweh’s covenant. 22:6–10
 - b) He commends Solomon to Yahweh’s power and authority in building. 22:11–13

- c) He reminds Solomon of his own preparations. 22:14–16
 - 3) He commands the leaders to help Solomon. 22:17–19
 - b. David orders the nation for temple service. 23:1—27:34
 - 1) He divides the Levites and reassigns their duties. 23:1–32
 - 2) He divides the Priests and other Levites. 24:1–31
 - 3) He divides musicians for temple service. 25:1–31
 - 4) He divides the gatekeepers. 26:1–19
 - 5) He assigns duties for the treasuries of the temple. 26:1–28
 - 6) He assigns administrative officials for all Israel. 26:29–32
 - 7) He divides the military. 27:1–15
 - 8) He assigns leaders of the tribes. 27:16–24
 - 9) He assigns overseers of the rest of the treasuries. 27:25–31
 - 10) Other royal officials are listed. 27:32–34
 - 3. David rehearses the covenant to Israel, and commissions the building of the temple. 28:1—29:25
 - a. David reminds the leaders of Israel of the covenant and exhorts them to be observant of Torah. 28:1–8
 - b. David commissions Solomon to build the temple. 28:9–21
 - 1) He exhorts Solomon to loyalty. 28:9–10
 - 2) He delivers the plans and materials to Solomon. 28:11–19
 - 3) He exhorts Solomon to be strong in the Lord. 28:20–21
 - c. David elicits the material support of Israel as an encouragement to Solomon’s loyalty. 29:1–20
 - d. Solomon is anointed as king. 29:21–25
 - C. David concludes his reign with the full blessing of God. 29:26–30
- 2 Chronicles
- III. Solomon’s kingship: Solomon’s faithfulness as temple builder testifies to Yahweh’s gracious and powerful presence among His people. 1:1—9:31
 - A. Solomon prepares to build the temple according to his own desire. 1:1—2:18
 - 1. He worships at Gibeon and asks Yahweh for wisdom. 1:1–12
 - 2. He rules mightily over Israel. 1:13–17
 - 3. He recruits and selects workers for the building. 2:1–18
 - B. Solomon builds the temple according to his father’s design. 3:1—5:1
 - 1. He builds the structure itself. 3:1–17
 - 2. He makes the furnishings. 4:1–5:1
 - C. Solomon dedicates the temple and re-institutes worship. 5:2—7:11
 - 1. He brings in the ark, resulting in the presence of the Shekinah. 5:2–6:2
 - 2. He rehearses the promises given to David for building. 6:3–11
 - 3. He prays for Yahweh’s gracious and forgiving presence on the basis of His promises to David. 6:12–42
 - 4. He dedicates the temple. 7:1–11
 - a. Fire from heaven consumes the sacrifices. 7:1–3
 - b. King and people offer appropriate sacrifices of praise and hold a feast of dedication. 7:4–11

- D. Solomon is assured by Yahweh that He has chosen to dwell among them and will be present for king and people in discipline, forgiveness, and restoration. 7:12–22
- E. Solomon’s blessing by Yahweh is noted as fulfillment of promise. 8:1—9:31
1. Solomon’s building displayed God’s glory. 8:1–11
 2. Solomon’s worship and care of the temple glorified God. 8:12–16
 3. Solomon’s international reputation honored God. 8:17—9:28
 - a. His association with Hiram of Tyre is noted. 8:17–18
 - b. His wisdom is extolled by the queen of Sheba. 9:1–12
 - c. His wealth and fame are extolled. 9:13–28
 4. Solomon’s death is noted. 9:29–31
- IV. The rule of the kings of Judah: While the sons of David vary in their faithfulness Yahweh remains steadfastly loyal to His covenant. 10:1—36:14
- A. Rehoboam loses most of his father’s realm. 10:1—12:16
1. He oppresses the people who defect to Jeroboam. 10:1–19
 2. He responds to Shemaiah’s warning not to attack Israel. 11:1–4
 3. He fortifies cities of Judah. 11:5–12
 4. He is strengthened by Levites from the north. 11:13–17
 5. He deploys his family wisely as administrators of Judah. 11:18–23
 6. He leads Judah in apostasy and is attacked by Shishak of Egypt. 12:1–12
 7. His reign was evil; he did not prepare his heart to seek Yahweh. 12:13–16
- B. Abijah confronts the apostasy of the northern kingdom, Israel. 13:1—14:1
1. He makes war with Jeroboam. 13:1–3
 2. He confronts Jeroboam and Israel. 13:4–12
 - a. He defends the rights of the Davidic dynasty. 13:4–8
 - b. He deplors Israel’s false religious system. 13:9–12
 3. He trusts in Yahweh and defeats Israel in battle. 13:13–20
 4. He grew mighty in his reign. 13:21—14:1
- C. Asa leads Judah in a covenant of renewal. 14:2—16:14
1. He removed places and objects of idolatry. 14:2–5
 2. He built fortified cities. 14:6–8
 3. He defeats Zerah of Ethiopia. 14:9–15
 4. He responds to prophets and leads Israel in a covenant of commitment. 15:1–19
 5. He errors in making a treaty with Syria against Baasha. 16:1–10
 6. His reign was good but he did not wholly trust Yahweh. 16:11–14
- D. Jehoshaphat delights in the ways of Yahweh and promotes Torah. 17:1—20:37
1. He seeks and honors Yahweh who establishes his kingdom. 17:1–19
 2. He unwisely allies himself with Ahab through marriage. 18:1—19:3
 3. He shepherds the people well and appoints able judges. 19:4–11
 4. He trusts Yahweh and sees His deliverance from enemies. 20:1–30
 5. His reign was right but the people did not turn to Yahweh. 20:31–37
- E. Jehoram follows ruthless Israel, yet David’s dynasty stands. 21:1–20
1. He establishes his kingdom by killing his brothers. 21:1–7
 2. He is invaded by enemies. 21:8–17
 3. He is afflicted with physical disease. 21:18–19

4. His passing was without sorrow because he ruled without faith. 21:20
- F. Ahaziah is replaced by Athaliah in treachery against David's house. 22:1–12
1. Ahaziah dies in Jehu's judgment against Joram of Israel. 22:1–9
 2. Athaliah attempts to destroy the house of David. 22:10–12
- G. Joash rules well only while Jehoiada lives. 23:1—24:27
1. He is crowned as a boy king, deposing usurper Athaliah. 23:1–15
 2. Jehoiada restores true worship according to Torah. 23:16–21
 3. Joash repairs the temple. 24:1–14
 4. Joash rebels after Jehoiada's death and kills Zechariah. 24:15–22
 5. Joash is assassinated for his treachery against Jehoiada's house. 24:23–27
- H. Amaziah defeats Edom and adopts their gods. 25:1–28
1. He begins well yet not with a loyal heart. 25:1–4
 2. He makes war against Edom as supported by a prophet. 25:5–13
 3. He makes the gods of Seir his own. 25:14–16
 4. He is defeated by Joash, king of Israel. 25:17–24
 5. He dies by conspiracy in Lachish. 25:25–28
- I. Uzziah rules well and prospers but then stumbles through pride. 26:1–23
1. He seeks God under Zechariah and prospers. 26:1–15
 2. He burns incense in Yahweh's house and becomes a leper. 26:16–23
- J. Jotham rules well but the people do not follow. 27:1–9
- K. Ahaz follows Israel's false religion and Baal. 28:1–27
1. He follows every idolatrous practice of Israel and Baalism. 28:1–4
 2. He is delivered to Syria and Israel. 28:5–8
 3. He receives back the captives through Yahweh's mercy. 28:9–15
 4. He requests an alliance with Assyria. 28:16–21
 5. He becomes exceedingly unfaithful and idolatrous. 28:22–25
 6. His reign was such that they did not bury him with the kings. 28:26–27
- L. Hezekiah reigns like his father David did. 29:1—32:33
1. He repairs, orders, and sanctifies the temple. 29:1–19
 2. He restores worship in the temple. 29:20–36
 3. He leads Israel in keeping the Passover. 30:1–27
 4. He provides for continual worship in the land. 31:1–21
 - a. He removes objects of false worship in the land. 31:1
 - b. He orders temple service and assures its support. 31:2–19
 - c. He sought God will all his heart. 31:20–21
 5. He trusts Yahweh in the face of Sennacherib's threats. 32:1–23
 6. He humbles himself after falling into pride. 32:24–26
 7. He was prospered by God. 32:27–30
 8. He was tested by God. 32:31
 9. His goodness resulted in honor at his death. 32:32–33
- M. Manasseh reigns wickedly yet repents after a captivity. 33:1–20
1. He adopts the pagan religion of the other nations. 33:1–9
 2. He repents in a Babylonian captivity and restores worship in Jerusalem. 33:10–17

3.	His life testified to Yahweh's gracious longsuffering.	33:18–20
N.	Amon did evil like his father but without repentance.	33:21–25
O.	Josiah walks unfailingly according to the ways of David.	34:1—35:27
1.	He removes the objects of pagan religion from Judah.	34:1–7
2.	He receives the recently discovered Book of the Law.	34:8–28
3.	He responds to the Book of the Law.	34:29—35:19
a.	He restores true worship.	34:29–33
b.	He leads in keeping the Passover.	35:1–19
4.	He presumptuously opposes Pharaoh Necho and is killed.	35:20–25
5.	His life is positively evaluated according to Torah.	35:26–27
P.	Jehoahaz reigns briefly and is deposed by the king of Egypt.	36:1–4
Q.	Jehoiakim reigns wickedly and is carried captive to Babylon.	36:5–8
R.	Jehoiachin reigns wickedly and is carried captive to Babylon.	36:9–10
S.	Zedekiah reigns wickedly and rebels against Nebuchadnezzar.	36:11–14
V.	The Judgment and Restoration of the temple and city are reported.	36:15–23
A.	The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple result from God's wrath, despite His compassionate warnings.	36:24–21
B.	The restoration of Jerusalem and the temple are decreed by Cyrus at Yahweh's direction.	36:22–23

Argument

I. Genealogies: The Chronicler displays Yahweh's elective strategies in providing for the house (dynasty) of David and the house (temple) of His presence (1:1—9:44).

In order to assure Israel that she was indeed the product of Yahweh's elective work the Chronicler begins with the most extensive listing of family records in the Bible. As noted above (page 4) the genealogies serve several very important purposes. They are designed to instruct and encourage the post-exilic community while also introducing basic thematic elements for the whole work. Those elements include an emphasis on the Davidic dynasty and the importance of the temple as indicative of Yahweh's presence among His elect people.

A. Abraham is selected out of all humanity to become the progenitor of the kingdom of Israel (1:1—54).

God's purpose encompasses more than one nation, Israel. It extends to all the families of the earth and has its roots in His commission of dominion to Adam before the fall (Gen 1:26–31). Hence, the restoration of Israel to the land is set within the context of the Lord's universal redemptive purposes, narrowed and focused through His covenant with the patriarch Abraham. Israel's encouragement stems from the fact that they were not alone among the nations; but neither were they the exclusive object of God's redemptive grace.⁸ They had been chosen as the seed of Abraham to be a special instrument of that redemptive revelation. Having failed they were now being restored to "try again." The inclusion of genealogies concerning Seir and Edom contribute two things to this universal theme. Seir, as Israel's near neighbor, stood to be blessed through Israel's blessing. Israel's abject failure throughout her history had deprived such nations of the witness needed to come under Yahweh's benevolent rule. Edom had kings "before any king ruled over the children of Israel" (1:43). Israel's kingdom was so designed that other kingdoms might see the King, Yahweh, and submit to His rule. Hence, the Chronicler skillfully introduces the theme of the Davidic dynasty's role in the mediation of God's kingdom on earth.⁹

⁸ For an illuminating discussion of creation as the seed bed of the Davidic covenant see Merrill, "Theology of Chronicles," 166-70 and idem "Covenant and the Kingdom: Genesis 1–3 as Foundation for Biblical Theology," *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (1987): 295-308.

⁹ See Merrill, "Theology of Chronicles," 172-73.

B. Judah is selected out of all the tribes of Israel from which to establish a house (dynasty) to rule over God's kingdom (2:1—3:24).

The nation promised to Abraham was created when it came out of Egypt and covenanted with Yahweh to serve Him (Exod 19:4–8). He Himself was their first king. However, He had also envisioned for them a man to rule from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Deut 17:14–20). Though Judah was not the primary tribe of Israel, it is moved to the beginning of the genealogies since it is the tribe of David, the ideal king by divine election and gift. The fact that the Davidic dynasty was still viable is seen by its being traced to beyond the end of the exile (3:17–24). The most important feature of Chronicles is the history of David's dynasty and its promised continuance. The second main theme is the centrality of the temple.

C. Levi is emphasized for its special service to the house of Yahweh (4:1—7:40).

Levi is emphasized by its central position in the tracing of the tribes of Israel and by the fact that it receives more attention than most everything else, Judah and its greatest member David being the exception.¹⁰ Apparently the twelve tribes are divided in this manner in order to construct a balanced chiasm with Levi at the center. Simeon did become closely associated with Judah, and eventually assimilated into it. The other three were the tribes that received their inheritance across the Jordan. The fact that Benjamin is

¹⁰ In his structural analysis Dorsey emphasizes the prominence of the temple as the chief concern of Chronicles (see David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 137-57). In this writer's opinion he overstates the relative importance of the temple, elevating it above David and his dynasty. It should be stressed that David has already been given "top billing" by Judah being moved to the head of the tribal genealogies. He also finds his way into Levi's section (cf. 6:31). Placing the temple as the single most important feature of Israel's nationhood is precisely the kind of mindset that led Israel to reject the Son of David when He finally did come.

not placed in the list with Judah may have to do with it being the tribe of Saul. Or this division may be one of the devices used by the Chronicler to emphasize the unity of Israel, rather than dividing it into northern and southern kingdoms, that being the emphasis of Kings.

The first group (Judah, Simeon, Reuben, Gad, and Half-Manasseh East) are divided into Judah-Simeon and the other three tribes. Judah is cast in a positive light via the account of Jabez (4:9–10). Likewise, Simeon is praised for taking possession of their territory (4:39–43). On the other hand the transjordan tribes, though praised for their trust in God for help in battle (5:18–21), are also marked out as unfaithful and thus deserving of defeat by Assyria (5:25–26). Thus, while the Chronicler makes some distinction between the faithfulness of the south against the north, it is not as all a prominent theme.

Levi's treatment emphasizes the importance of the temple in God's relationship with Israel (6:1–49). The emphasized center of this section is the family of Aaron, denoting the way of approach that God had established. The treatment of the cities of the various families of the tribe serves to make the point that Yahweh's intent was to be available to all the people of the land, not just those dwelling in His capital, Jerusalem (6:54–81). The emphasis on the levitical musicians is interesting.¹¹

The second group of tribes again represented both south (Benjamin) and north (Naphtali, Half-Manasseh West, Ephraim, and Asher) (7:1–40). There is really nothing negative said about any of them, the only positive comment being that some of them had

¹¹ Selman says: "It is the Levites' role in the musical side of worship that is their most distinctive contribution, however (1 Ch. 6:31–32; 15:16–28; 16:4–6, 37:42; 25:1–31; 2 Ch. 5:12–13; 7:6; 20:19, 21; 29:25–30). David's organization of the Levites into three groups of musicians is repeatedly mentioned (1 Ch. 6:31–48; 15:16–22; 25:1–31; 2 Ch. 8:14; 29:25–30), as is their involvement in Israel's praise (cf. e.g. 1 Ch. 16:4–6, 37–42; 2 Ch. 5:11–14; 7:4–10). Their chief function is in fact to lead the people in praise, without which Israel's various dramatic sacrificial rituals were little more than a silent witness to the covenant." (*1 Chronicles*, 58).

“mighty men of valor” (7:5, 7, 9, 11, 40). This is one way of seeing the Chronicler’s emphasis on the unity of the nation.

D. Saul is associated with the captivity of Israel (8:1—9:44).

Since the family of Benjamin has already been covered (7:6–12), that tribe’s reintroduction at this point (8:1–40) must have a special purpose. The obvious change is the inclusion of that portion of the family tree leading to Saul, the first king of Israel. That the section containing Saul is repeated nearly exactly at the end of the next chapter should be taken as forming an *inclusio*. Israel’s unfaithfulness, which ultimately led to captivity (9:1), is what Saul is later charged with (10: 13). The mention of those who dwelt in Jerusalem, highlighted by the Levites, once again emphasizes the temple as God’s dwelling place. This manner of concluding the genealogies serves to underscore God’s choice of Jerusalem as His dwelling place as opposed to Gibeon, which is where Israel had chosen to place the tabernacle. God’s choice of David had already been established (2:1—3:24).¹² Therefore, the lists of the various groups dwelling in Jerusalem should be taken as pre-captive populations rather than post-exilic.¹³ In summary, the

¹² Sailhamer’s insightful comments are helpful:

“What does the last list of names [8:29–40] tell about Saul? The answer lies in the way the lists of names are arranged in chapters 8 and 9. In both chapters, those ‘who lived in Jerusalem’ (8:28; 9:34) are distinguished from those who lived in Gibeon (8:29; 9:35). The purpose of that distinction is to show that Saul was from that part of the family of Benjamin that is from Gibeon, not Jerusalem. There were Benjamites who lived in Jerusalem, but Saul was not of that group.

Those two cities, Gibeon and Jerusalem, were important centers. Jerusalem was the city of David. It was also Zion, the place where God’s Temple had been built Gibeon was an important place of worship for Israel, and even Solomon went there on one occasion to worship (2 Chr. 1:3–6).

Gibeon, however, was not *God’s* chosen place. Gibeon was chosen *by Israel* as the place where the Tabernacle could be kept. But God had chosen Jerusalem as the place where His name would dwell Not only was Jerusalem God’s choice, but so was the house of David. Jerusalem and David are the two components of God’s plan of salvation and blessing in the books of Chronicles; Saul and Gibeon are not.” (emphasis Sailhamer’s—John Sailhamer, *First and Second Chronicles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 27).

¹³ See J. Barton Payne, “1, 2 Chronicles,” in *I Kings-Job Vol. 4 of Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols, Frank E. Gaebelein and Richard D. Polcyn eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 365.

genealogies serve the important functions of highlighting God's choice of David and Jerusalem and of confirming the unity of the tribes as one nation.

II. David's Kingship: David's response to Yahweh's covenant promises becomes a model for the work and worship of the ideal king (10:1—29:30).

Having established the prominence of the house of David and the tribe of Levi, the Chronicler begins to develop the outworking of God's sovereign purposes, centered upon His covenant with David and his heirs, and upon the temple as the place of His presence and power. Through a skillful interweaving of material about these two houses (dynasty and temple) the author demonstrates that David's greatness lay in his loyalty to God as demonstrated through a whole-hearted commitment to God's dwelling place. Thus David becomes the model of the ideal king, against whom all other kings of Israel will be measured. On the basis of David's manifested devotion, Yahweh enters into a covenant, promising David that there will always be an heir to rule on his throne. It is, then, on the basis of this eternal, unconditional covenant that David continues his loyal devotion to Yahweh.

A. David secures the kingdom and establishes a place of worship (10:1—16:43).

Saul, who has already been associated with the unfaithfulness of the nation, is used as a foil against which David's whole-hearted loyalty will be cast (10:1–14). Saul's failure lay in a fatal disregard for Yahweh's instruction and guidance (10:13–14). David will make a similar mistake but will completely recover from it (cf. 15:13). Chapter 11 begins with a summary statement featuring two main points: (1) David was made king by all Israel at Hebron (repeated at the end of this section—12:38) and (2) he captured the

city of Jerusalem which would become his and Yahweh's capital. From a human standpoint David inspired loyalty and bravery in the men who followed him, in stark contrast to Saul (11:10—12:22). Members of every tribe are included in David's coronation at Hebron, a fact designed to remind the post-exilic community that the Davidic dynasty existed for the blessing of all Israel (12:23–40).

David's long struggle to become king, so prominent in Samuel, is ignored so that the writer can center on what made David so great, namely, his attitude toward Yahweh as revealed by his action on behalf of the ark of the covenant (13:1—16:43). David fails to inquire as to the proper way to move the ark and is discouraged as a result of the consequences (13:1–14). However, he does seek the Lord's guidance with respect to doing battle with the Philistines and is successful (14:1–17). His prowess in holy war must be applied to holy worship. David learns his lesson and the ark is successfully brought to Jerusalem (15:1–28). David is whole-heartedly involved in every aspect of the ark's movement, including the instruction of the Levites who would carry it, the appointment of worship leaders (15:16–24), and even as a functioning priest (15:27).¹⁴ The fact that this was not for David merely a token act is seen by his composition of a psalm for the occasion (16:7–36) and his directing of various levitical officials to continue in services of worship (16:37–43).

It should be noted that it was not until David had become convinced that Jerusalem was the divine choice for the place of worship that he made it his home as well (cf. 13:1–3; 14:2; 15:1). In this way the Chronicler shows how both David and Yahweh's thrones come to be located in this particular city.

¹⁴ Merrill takes this to be a proper action since David was acting as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek ("Theology of Chronicles," 177; 180-82).

B. David receives a covenant and devotes himself to its full realization

(17:1—29:25).

Yahweh's covenant with David is the central feature of the rest of the great monarch's story. Its full statement occurs in chapter 17, followed by two substantial rehearsals of key features. This marks the structural divisions for this section. The Chronicler's application of the Davidic covenant centers on Solomon's building of the temple. The juxtaposition of these two ideas (covenant and temple) will occur repeatedly throughout the rest of the book (which includes 2 Chronicles), establishing the foundation for hope for the post-exilic community.

God's communication of His intention to build David a house (dynasty) in response to David's intention to build Yahweh a house (temple) is almost exactly as it is written in 2 Samuel (17:1–15). David has been selected to be the root of an eternal dynasty. There are no conditions attached¹⁵ and David immediately expresses his worshipful amazement (17:16–22) and prays for the covenant's fulfillment (17:23–27). The rest of Chronicles could be said to be the initial answer to that prayer. As in Samuel God's word to David contains near, personal promises, which are immediately realized, as a means of confirming the certainty of the distant (eternal) dynastic provisions—his enemies are subdued (17:10; cf. 18:1—20:8) resulting in an international reputation (cf. 17:8). The incident with the ungrateful Ammonites illustrates the principle of the Abrahamic covenant that is working underneath all, namely, that those who bless Abraham's seed will be blessed and those who insult the same will be cursed (Gen 12:3). The Davidic Covenant is as sure as the Abrahamic Covenant. Not even David's serious

¹⁵ Even the conditional element of a son's discipline is elided from the Chronicles version.

violation of Torah in the matter of numbering Israel can cause Yahweh to nullify His commitment to the promises, though He is obligated to discipline David for his transgression (21:1–30). That David understands the grace and mercy of the Lord is evidenced by his choosing punishment at the hands of Yahweh directly (21:12–13). This type of patterning establishes David as the paradigm of the ideal king, who pursues God above all things, evidencing his faith through unwavering commitment to the temple and its worship.

Once the covenant is shown to be unconditional with respect to David's performance as king, it is developed with respect to the outworking of Solomon's royal responsibilities (22:1—27:34). David expresses his commitment to see the temple built by his son (22:1–5) and then exhorts Solomon to the same commitment via a rehearsal of the appropriate aspects of the covenant (22:6–11), wishing for him God's wisdom and strength for the task (22:12–13) and assuring him that all provision had already been made (22:14–19). Finally, when David was old, he ordered the entire nation for temple service (23:1—27:34). David has omitted nothing in doing what he could to see Yahweh's worship established in Israel.

The third rehearsal of the Davidic covenant under girds David's commission to Solomon to build. Before the whole assembled leadership of Israel, David exhorts him, and them, to be observant of Torah and to serve Yahweh with whole-hearted loyalty (28:1–10). After delivering the plans and materials to his son, David elicits the material support of the people as encouragement for the temple's completion (28:11—29:9). Not uncharacteristically David concludes his charge with a hymn of praise and a prayer of commendation (29:10–20). Thus, this second anointing of Solomon to be king is related

to his commission to build the temple, whereas the first, recorded only in Kings, is in the context of the political aspirations of Adonijah (29:22; cf. 1 Kings 1:28–40). In Chronicles Solomon’s reign will be evaluated on the basis of how he performs with respect to temple building. The notice of the end of David’s career (29:26–30) emphasizes the blessings associated with his obedience. The context makes it clear that the center of his attention, the great passion of his heart, was the construction of a house worthy of the Lord whom he had worshipped with a whole heart.

III. Solomon’s kingship: Solomon’s faithfulness as temple builder testifies to Yahweh’s gracious and powerful presence among His people (2 Chronicles 1:1—9:31).

As the first son of David’s dynasty, Solomon demonstrates that Yahweh’s goals with respect to a kingdom on earth are viable. His obedience with respect to temple building and worship results in Yahweh’s glorious presence among His people as well as in other nations coming to recognize the supremacy of Israel’s God. The Chronicler is not “white-washing” Solomon’s performance by leaving out the (extremely) damaging material found in Kings. Rather, he is showing that whenever the son of David serves Yahweh with a whole heart, as seen in honoring His house, God’s blessed presence is the result. Conversely, he is emphasizing the necessity of the temple as the focal point of the king’s obedience and of the Lord’s demonstration of Himself to the rest of the nations. Solomon is the first great positive illustration of this truth. The rest of the kings of Judah will illustrate the point both positively and negatively.

Solomon’s first act as king is to ask the Lord for wisdom to govern, thus setting up the answer to David’s prayer (cf. 1 Chr 22:12). As well, He continues making provisions for building, thus demonstrating that he shared David’s passion for Yahweh

and His house (1:1—2:18). Solomon does indeed build the temple according to his father's design (3:1—5:1) and puts it into service (5:2—7:11). The ark is moved into place (without the disaster of David's first attempt at moving it), which results immediately in the presence of the Shekinah (5:2—6:2). Solomon shows his whole-hearted involvement through his speech recalling the Davidic Covenant (6:3—11) and in his prayer (6:12—42) and sacrifices (7:1—11) of dedication, which God consumed with fire from heaven (7:1). Yahweh is obviously pleased with the whole effort, and the attitude in which it was carried out, and, thus, assures Solomon of His presence for king and people. Even when His presence must result in discipline, it will be for the purpose of restoration (7:12—22). As confirmation that Solomon and his temple were accomplishing what had been envisioned in the covenant at Sinai, namely, Yahweh's glorification among the nations, a summary of the king's other achievements is given (8:1—11). This is followed by notice that Solomon was intent on continuing in true worship (8:12—16), capped off by an illustration of his international renown, the queen of Sheba's visit (8:17—9:28). Her confession of the supremacy of Solomon's God, Yahweh, above all others was the precise result envisioned in Israel's covenant relationship with God established through Moses. Though Solomon's violations of Torah are implied (cf. 9:13—28 cp. with Deut 17:16—17), his honoring of Yahweh through temple building and worship at this point in his life is what is important to the Chronicler's purpose in writing. Hence, his death is positively stated, though not in excessively glowing terms (9:29—31).

IV. The rule of the kings of Judah: While the sons of David vary in their faithfulness

Yahweh remains steadfastly loyal to His covenant (10:1—36:14).

A major difference between the account of the history of Israel found in Kings and that of Chronicles is that here only the southern line of monarchs is traced. Northern kings are mentioned but only in conjunction with a king of Judah. This fact underscores the centrality of the Davidic dynasty in the Chronicler's thematic strategy. In addition, most of the kings are related, either positively or negatively, to the temple and/or the worship of Yahweh. Whereas Kings emphasizes the reasons why Israel and Judah went into captivity, Chronicles focuses on the relationship of king and temple as an encouragement to those who had come out of captivity. To that end there are a number of motifs that may be summarized at this point.

First, there is the pattern of evaluation of the sons of David. Each king's greatness, or lack thereof, is determined by his heart for God, which is in turn demonstrated by a positive attitude toward the house of the Lord and by a humble response to the prophets' instructions and rebukes. The key attitudes and activities that are mentioned throughout are trust, seeking the Lord, and faithfulness to temple and Torah. Like David, the good kings had a positive attitude toward Yahweh and an understanding of what he had purposed.

Second is the fact that the king was the single most important factor in the establishment, maintenance, and restoration of true worship in Israel. Just as David had done, so each king was in a position to command the priests and Levites with respect to religious reforms and spiritual practices. Though only David seemed to have functioned

in the capacity of a priest (of the order of Melchizedek), they all were responsible for knowing and enforcing Torah (cf. Deut 17:18–19).

Third, it became increasingly clear that no king was able to effect a deep seated, sustained renewal of the people. Even though some of the kings carried on extensive reforms, the people were not turned, at least for very long. However, each king was capable of leading the people further and further into disobedience and idolatry, and many did.

Fourth, even though the Lord regularly, and often promptly, disciplined the disobedience of the king, no king's failure could abrogate God's covenant promises to David, no matter how serious the lapse may have been. There would always be a lamp for the house of David (cf. 21:7).

Finally, the history of the kings of Judah demonstrated that as long as there was a temple, Yahweh was present to forgive, restore, and bless when the nation turned to Him with a true heart of repentance. The king would become the great object lesson of this for each generation, and there were many such examples. Yahweh had chosen Israel out of His grace and guaranteed David's house unconditionally. The temple and its sacrificial system were the means by which a holy God could dwell in the midst of a sinful people. While the temple existed there was the possibility, if not always the confidence, that Yahweh's powerful and sustaining presence could be experienced. These were all truths that the post-captivity generations needed to have affirmed so that they might live in hope.

While each king contributes something to the above themes, the structural emphasis is placed on several of the good kings by giving more attention to their positive

accomplishments or experiences. These are Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah.¹⁶

Rehoboam, though loosing most of his father's realm, is blessed by Levites who returned from the north (10:1—12:16). Egypt begins to reassert its control during his reign. Abijam (Abijah in Kings) is extolled for confronting the apostasy of Israel, though Kings condemns him for walking in the sins of Rehoboam (13:1—14:1). Asa leads Judah in a covenant of renewal (14:2—16:14) and Jehoshaphat trusts in Yahweh and promotes Torah, even though he is unwise in some of his associations (17:1—20:37). Ahaziah is nearly the end of the Davidic dynasty as his mother seeks to destroy the royal offspring upon his death (22:1–12). Joash, the providentially preserved lamp of David, rules well as long as the priest Jehoiada is alive to influence him by Torah (23:1—24:27). Amaziah, though he begins well, does not have a heart loyal to Yahweh and ends up adopting the gods of Edom (25:1–28). Uzziah rules well and then stumbles through pride (26:1–23) and Jotham rules well but the people do not follow (27:1–9).

Hezekiah has very little to criticize. He shows great heart in restoring temple worship and great faith in resisting the threats of Sennacherib with Isaiah's encouragement (29:1—32:33). Manasseh has a long reign characterized by wickedness, yet repents in the end, testifying to Yahweh's gracious longsuffering (33:1–20). His son Amon was evil as well but did not repent (33:21–25). With such poor examples Josiah might be expected to follow suit. Yet he turns out to be one of Judah's great reformer kings, removing pagan religion and restoring the true worship of Yahweh according to Torah

¹⁶ Rehoboam receives relatively as much attention as do the "good" kings. This is due to the fact that he is the first of the southern kings of the divided monarchy and there are certain facets of royal behavior that are being highlighted for later comparison.

(34:1—35:27). He illustrates the truth that at any time the right king might be expected to arise from the house of David and lead Israel into the fullness of its promised blessing.

Following Josiah the monarchy, under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah experiences only defeat and humiliation, and ends up going into the Babylonian captivity (36:1–14). Despite Yahweh’s continual, compassionate warnings Jerusalem and its temple are destroyed (36:15–21). Yahweh is no longer present among His people to deliver and bless according to the Mosaic design. Instead, Israel’s life would hang in the balance, its future as uncertain as the tenuous power structures of their conquerors. However, Babylon was not the end of Israel. In two compressed verses, the Chronicler concludes with a word of great hope (36:22–23). Isaiah’s prophesied deliverer, Cyrus, proclaims release to the captives and decrees the rebuilding of Yahweh’s house in Jerusalem. Since Yahweh had graciously granted the rebuilding of the house of His presence, would it not be reasonable to conclude that He was still intent upon sending the son of David, the Son of promise, to lead Israel into the everlasting reign of righteousness that had so eluded them over these past centuries. The clear message of Chronicles is that the one belongs with the other. Therefore, Israel was not without hope. The son of David would yet appear.

Summary

Temple and king go hand in hand. If Yahweh had provided for the rebuilding of Israel’s destroyed temple, then He could be counted upon to send the son of David to maintain and honor it. By anchoring Israel’s history in the need of all humanity as addressed in Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham, and by looking back at the establishment of an unconditional promise to send the ideal king, one whose attitude and actions were like

David's, the Chronicler has set a benchmark for the evaluation of the son of David who was yet to appear. The clear intimation of this narrative history is that the existence of the temple betokens the advent of a king. When that king comes, a sure mark of identification must be how he views and treats that temple, the house of his royal Father. Though Chronicles may not contain the kind of overt messianic, eschatological material so prevalent in most of the literature from this period, it is clear that it is intended to strongly promote such an expectation.

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